

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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NEW YORK, JUNE 11, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

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OR, WONDERFUL ADVENTURES ON THE WING AND AFLOAT

By NO NAME.



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CHAPTER I.

THE EAGLE'S FLIGHT.

A most picturesque scene begins our story, situated in a woods bordering one side of Wrightstown Bay, on the Atlantic sea coast.

On the other side of the water were great masses of rocks and cliffs, where a lighthouse was built at the entrance to the harbor.

The head of the bay was occupied by the township, consisting of fishermen's huts, several thriving streets lined with stores, and a great number of elegant private residences, surrounded by handsome gardens.

Several years before the place was made famous by an inventor of submarine boats, named Bill Wright, after whom the place was named.

His son, Jack, inheriting his talent, had, upon his father's death, invented several marvels for traveling beneath the sea, and at the time we allude to was recognized as the leading citizen of the town.

Perhaps it was because he was the richest person in the place and owned half the town, as he had gained several huge fortunes by dragging immense treasures from the dark recesses of the deep with his submarine boats, aided by two friends of his, named Tim Topstay and Fritz Schneider.

The woods to which we have alluded were a part of Jack Wright's estate, and as our story opens in the month of August, the trees, bushes and shrubs were in full bloom, disseminating a most fragrant odor upon the balmy afternoon air.

Thousands of birds twittered in the foliage, little red squirrels darted up the tree trunks, and numberless gray rabbits shot over the velvety greensward at the slightest alarm.

Within a glen in the woods there stood a wagon, painted red, blue and white, with a roof that gave it the appearance of a house on wheels, steps at the back giving ingress to the interior by a rear door, while on the side were painted rows of artificial windows.

The team of bony buckskins that dragged it were unhitched and browsing the luxuriant vegetation in among the trees, the old patched harness hung on a branch, at one side stood a dirty tent, and in front of it was a camp-fire, with a tripod and kettle over it, around which lounged several swarthy men, women and children.

In the ruddy glow of the fire their tattered, but many-colored clothing assumed a strange aspect, and their long, black hair and jet eyes were clearly defined as those of the wandering nomads called gypsies.

There were a woman and a man seated upon the gnarled trunk of a fallen tree, the former thrumming a strange air upon a guitar, and the woman playing a tambourine, while in front of them a boy and girl were gracefully posturing and dancing to the peculiar rhythm.

The rest of the gypsies were looking on in amazement and applauding, and in the tent doorway sat the dark-faced queen of the tribe with her tiny infant resting on her lap, with which she was playing.

In the sky above the glen several huge birds were circling

around and around at a great height in quest of prey, and in the midst of the revelry a stranger came down a forest path, and paused to witness the gypsy dance.

The keen eyes of the queen quickly detected the gentleman, who was a tall, thin person of forty-five, with a long red nose, long hair, and wearing a high silk hat, and a clerical suit of black.

She said something in the Romany dialect, and the music stopped, whereupon she laid her child upon a cushion at the tent door, and arose to her feet, the big hoops in her ears and trimming on her dress jingling with the silvery tinkle of bells.

"Will the gentleman have his fortune told?" she asked in wheedling tones, as she approached him with hands extended, and a smile upon her dusky face. "There is truth in the gypsy's horoscope, and the stars never fail to reveal the past, present and future."

"Hum!" coughed the stranger. "My good woman, I have but little faith in such nonsense. Clairvoyants, mind-readers, mesmerists and second sight are a humbug in my opinion. But I will give you half a dollar if you will show me the nearest way out of these confounded woods so I can get into Wrightstown."

The eyes of the gypsy woman snapped, for she did not like the skeptical manner assumed by the dignified stranger, and she answered curtly:

"The gypsy queen will gladly show you the way, but for the satisfaction of proving to you that phrenology, palmistry, and similar arts that I pretend to have mastered are no myths, if you will cross my palm with your silver, I shall not only show you the way, but shall tell your fortune as well, and defy you to find any errors in what I say."

"Well," laughed the stranger, producing a fifty-cent silver piece and placing it in the nettled woman's palm, "it will take a pretty strong argument on your part to convince me that the lying, thievish, murderous disposition of the gypsies ain't all it is cracked up to be. But," he added nervously, as he saw every one scowl at him, "if you keep your word and tell me anything wonderful, I will reward you with ten times as much money."

"Good! Let Zobeide study your palm," said the woman vehemently.

The stranger extended his hand, and the gypsy queen intently scanned it for several moments, and then closed her ravishing eyes as if thinking.

"Your name," said she, with a frown, "is Peleg Hopkins."

"Why—bless me!" said the gentleman, with a start. "How did you know?"

"Never mind. Your profession is that of a naturalist."

"By Jove! You're right——"

"Silence! You are an antiquarian, a gatherer of shells and curiosities."

"True! True! This is strange—wonderful—incomprehensible——"

"To proceed, you have just come from a big city, where you have been living——"

"New York, as true as you are born——"

"And are about to call upon a youth called Jack Wright, a great inventor."

"So I am. Go on—go on!"

"Your object is to make a trip in the sky with him in his latest invention."

"I don't see how under the sun you can guess so well!"

"He was not at home, and you wandered into these woods while awaiting his return, and thus got lost," continued the gypsy queen.

"If anyone had told me of your singular power to know things which are entirely foreign to you, I should have said he was a—a—liar!"

"Does that satisfy you?" demanded Zobeide, dropping his hands.

"Amplly," replied the amazed professor, as he pulled a crisp, five-dollar bill out of his pocket, and handed it to her. "You are certainly a most marvelous creature, and as I never saw you before, and you cannot possibly know anything about me, I give you credit for doing one of the most astonishing things I ever heard of."

"Then I shall see that you are shown properly into Wrightstown, sir," said the gypsy woman. "Queppo," she added, turning to a boy of about fifteen, "lead the gentleman along the shore path into the town."

The boy nodded, went trotting along, and Mr. Peleg Hopkins followed him.

He had no sooner disappeared from sight, however, when a merry peal of laughter rippled from beneath the white, gleaming teeth of Zobeide, and her whole figure was convulsed with mirth.

The rest of the band had been looking on silently and curiously, and as soon as her hilarity subsided one of the men said, in curious tones:

"You seem to have told him point blank truths that time, Zobeide."

"And no wonder," she replied, sobering down partially.

"In what manner did you so accurately reach the facts about him?"

"Half an hour ago you know I was gathering herbs in the woods."

"Yes, yes," assented the rest interestedly.

"Well, ha, ha, ha! I saw that man intent upon what I observed to be his pet hobby, and I was about to go on, when I saw him drop a letter. When he had gone I picked it up and stole away. Upon reading it in the tent, I found that it was a letter which he had written in New York to a youth named Jack Wright, of whom we already know, expressing about all I just told him, but which he had forgotten to mail, and that's how I told his fortune."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorused the whole tribe.

Their merriment knew no bounds, and the dark queen flourished the bill which the professor had given her, and cried, laughingly:

"What fools some men are! They scoff at what seems supernatural, and yet they are more easily gulled than anyone."

"Hurrah for Zobeide!" cheered one of the men.

A wild cheer and a ripple of laughter burst from every dusky throat.

But just then a most startling event occurred that cast the whole rollicking, jolly band into the profoundest depths of blank despair.

There sounded a fearful whirr of wings, and down from the sky swept one of the birds which had been circling around overhead.

It was an enormous gray eagle.

Up in the lofty, inaccessible crags across the bay these kings of the air had built their eyrie, where no man could climb to them.

Startled by the screams of its pinions, the gypsies glanced

around in affright, and terror struck their souls when they saw what made the noise.

Down the eagle swooped with a terrible cry, its sharp eyes fixed intently upon the queen's infant lying upon the cushion at the tent door, where she had left it.

In an instant the powerful talons were fastened upon the child, and the terrified mother uttered a wild shriek, and rushed forward to save her wailing offspring, her dark face contorted by a look of intense fear.

But ere she had taken two steps, up soared the mighty bird into the sky, with a clutch upon the swaddling clothes of the babe, carrying the little gypsy with it, far out of everybody's reach.

"My child! My child!" shrieked the gypsy woman frantically.

She held up her arms and spread her fingers to the sky, but the eagle swept up, up, up into the bright sky with the child, gradually growing smaller and smaller as it ascended, until at last it looked like a mere speck outlined against the fleecy clouds sweeping across the blue domes of heaven. Another eagle, striving to rob it of the child, pursued it.

Every one of the gypsies had their merriment turned into the most intense anguish, and a wail of woe pealed from every throat when they beheld the strange fate which had overtaken their future king.

The distracted mother fell upon her knees, tears streaming from her eyes, and the loudest lamentations arose from the tribe all around her, for it seemed that the child was doomed to a most terrible death.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGE FLYING FISH.

A far different scene was taking place an hour before this incident occurred at the residence of Jack Wright, the boy inventor, on the outskirts of Wrightstown.

The youth dwelt in a magnificent house standing in the midst of an elegantly laid-out garden, at the foot of which ran a creek, which emptied into the bay.

Upon the bank of the stream, at the foot of the garden, stood a very large and handsome brick workshop, in which the boy had been in the habit of constructing his submarine boats.

The building now had a side wing added to it, where the young inventor purposed to construct a style of ship which differed somewhat from those to which he had been always addicted.

Since returning from his last trip, Jack Wright had made a new and wonderful discovery in regard to aerial navigation, and had been hard at work contriving a marvelous invention, built after a model which he found to work properly.

At the time alluded to the boy was in his new workshop putting the finishing touches upon his strange-looking airship.

Those who are familiar with the boy will recollect that he was an athletic fellow of less than twenty, with dark eyes and hair, a resolute, nervy disposition, and a quick and ready brain.

He was now attired in a neat blue suit and cap, as he stood off at one side of the shop viewing his singular-looking vessel, and observed that she seemed to be perfect in every detail.

"Navigating the air is a peculiar venture," the boy muttered, "and although I have studied everything concerning aeronautics, I expect that I'll find it a far different matter than submarine traveling, to which I have always devoted my

attention. At any rate, she is bound to work right, for her model did, and as for traveling on the water, there can be no question of her ability to go at the rate of fifty knots an hour."

He turned a lever on the wall of the building and the entire roof opened, folding back like the window shutters on a store, leaving the bright blue sky exposed, up into which he intended to ascend.

At that moment there came a ring at the door-bell, and the boy answered it, for the place was kept locked to keep people out of the shop.

Upon the threshold stood a man with a wooden leg, a sandy beard and a glass eye, attired in the uniform of a marine, with a long envelope in his hand.

He was a retired man-o'-war's man, chiefly noted for the enormous quantity of plug tobacco he consumed, the outrageous lies he manufactured, and his devotion to Jack, with whom he resided.

Timothy Topstay was this individual's name; he had always accompanied the boy on his submarine voyages, shared Jack's treasures, and had once been a messmate on the U. S. frigate Wabash with the young inventor's father.

"Hello, old fellow, what brings you here?" queried Jack, upon seeing who he was.

"Lord save yer, I've jest be'n down fer ther mail, my hearty," replied the old sailor.

"Is this letter for me?"

"Aye, lad, an' a government envelope, too."

Jack opened it, and glanced over the paper it contained.

"It's my patent on this boat granted," he commented. "Where is Fritz?"

"Ther Dutch lubber wuz in a bar'l ther las' time I sot my eyes on him."

"In a barrel?" queried the boy, with a puzzled look.

"Aye—a bar'l o' tar," replied the old sailor, with a broad grin. "Yer see, as I hove inter ther garding under full sail wot should ther pot-bellied pirate do but bring me up in ther wind wi' a bombardment o' chicking fruit wot must a-been laid by a polecat. One o' 'em plunked me in ther neck, an' I tried ter run away from myself, when Fritz an' me come tergether two p'inters ter ther wind'ard o' whar ther roofers wuz workin' on ther barn. I gave him a sockdolager in ther mizzen riggin', an' he veered off ter ther le'ward, an' landed in ther barrel o'—"

"Holy shiminey Christmas!" roared an irate voice just then, interrupting Tim's explanation, and into the shop darted the ancient mariner with a hop, skip and a jump. "Where vhas dot oldt glub-footed, bandy-legged, glass-eyed son-of-a-sea-gooks? Gief him to me for a minute. Led me shust hit him mit dis bale stick vunct. Yer can haf a free excursion to his funeral, und yer don't vhas got ter veep a tear for him alretty!"

The speaker rushed around an angle of the building brandishing a club.

He was a dumpy, round, fat Dutch boy, with a broad face, yellow hair, and a costume on that he must have worn over the sea in the steerage, but he was covered with oozing tar from head to foot, and being of a pugnacious, excitable temperament, his temper was up to the boiling point.

The young Dutchman was Jack's other stanch friend, who had always gone with him as companion, cook and electrician upon his adventurous trips, and he also lived at the boy's house.

Jack could not repress a smile at the forlorn, yet comical appearance of Mynheer Schneider, but he assumed a grave look, and shouted:

"Here, now, Fritz, I want this confounded practical joking stopped. You and Tim will kill each other yet if you don't end it. Do you hear me?"

"I van't ter kill him!" roared the Dutch boy wildly.

"Well, you can't do it here! Drop that club!"

"Och, Gott, vy don't yer led me only proke his gollar pone?" pleaded Fritz.

"Instead of skylarking this way, I thought you was getting ready to go up in the ship with me," said Jack angrily. "It is almost six o'clock, and we are, as you well know, to give my boat a trial trip at that hour, so that all the people in Wrights-town can see the ascent. Now look at the state you are in. Go and clean yourself or you can't go, that's all there is about it."

The angry young Dutchman went away grumbling because he was denied the pleasure of massacring his tormentor, and Jack turned around and saw Tim peeping out at him from behind the boat.

"You had better get aboard and keep out of his way," said Jack, in warning tones. "He will paralyze you if he gets the chance."

There was an accommodation ladder at the side of the boat, and Tim ascended to the deck without saying a word, and went inside.

The airship stood propped up on braces in the middle of the shop, all sorts of tools and the remains of metal and wood-work littering the floor.

It was a cylinder, with a slightly flattened top, about one hundred feet long, fifteen foot beam, and twenty feet in depth, the bow running up gracefully, cutter shaped, with a tubular searchlight on the apex, and the stern ended in a point, with a huge propeller on the end and a huge rudder underneath, working on a horizontal rod extending aft of the wheel.

Along the sides were rows of deadlights, wheels and wire belts; a metal railing encircled the deck, and from the circular pilot-house forward there ran a deck cabin aft, in which there were doors and windows. Five helices arose on each side. Two braced hollow posts arose on the forward and after deck, with rimmed propellers of twenty feet in diameter, with a smaller screw above to increase speed.

Below the catheads on either side of the hull two long, strong rods ran obliquely aft, to which were securely bolted sheets of aluminum, tougher and far lighter than steel, forming a pair of bat-like wings which folded up like a fan when not in use, at the sides of the boat. Aft were two more.

By means of the most powerful electrical machinery, within the boat, these wings could be operated exactly after the manner of a bird's flight, while the helices maintained the midship section, keeping the craft upon an even keel.

If the boat were upon the water, the same electric batteries revolved the under screw to propel the boat, while in the air it added to her speed in driving her ahead or at backing her, in conjunction with another larger wheel.

Upon the bow of the boat was printed the name Flying Fish, a most appropriate cognomen, as the invention was designed to travel over water or through the atmosphere.

But why had this queer device been constructed at the cost of a small fortune, and the expense of much toil, care and thought?

We will tell you, briefly, that it was done by Jack Wright merely to gratify a whim, a talent he had for inventing machines that hitherto had seemed to be impossible for mankind to evolve and protect.

He had no present particular use for the invention, but having plenty of money to spend in carrying out his ideas, possessing the inventive ability to create this marvel, and wishing to usefully employ his spare time, he had carried out his plan in hopes that some time in the modern future he might be the means of revolutionizing the tactics of civilized warfare.

It was an amusing pleasure to him to invent these contrivances, and he did it with no actual purpose in view for the

present; yet, strangely enough, he had never yet brought out a patent that did not repay his outlay upon it, and give him a big profit, besides all the good he was fortunate enough to do with them for suffering humanity.

As far as the boy could see the boat was perfect, yet there were, of course, defects in its arrangement which could only be ascertained and remedied by a trial trip, and this was precisely what he intended to give the boat within an hour.

He went aboard of the craft, entered the pilot-house, in which stood the rudder-wheel, and glanced up at the wall, where a glass case contained a number of gauges, indicators, thermometers, barometers and other instruments of a like nature for working the boat.

In front of the wheel stood a binnacle and compass, and on the box was screwed a switch-board, with several levers upon it, by which the pilot could control all the working parts of the boat by electric wires that were in communication with the battery, machinery and levers.

The chronometer indicated five minutes to six, and the boy anxiously glanced out of the glass window of the pilot-house to see if Fritz was coming, for he wanted to be punctual, as he knew that there were thousands of people, who came thronging to Wrightstown from far and near, anxiously waiting to see the ascent of the aerial vessel.

Just then the shop door went open with a bang and in rushed Fritz, pursued by several policemen and a mob of citizens, all of whom were drenched and seemed greatly excited.

With amazing agility for such a stout person, the Dutch boy rushed up the ladder.

"Stard der poat!" he yelled, frantically. "Let her go, or by shingo I vhas get arrested!"

Jack gave a violent start, for he saw that something serious had happened to his friend, and he felt anxious to save Fritz from trouble.

Observing that the whole crowd were about to rush upon the boat the boy instantly turned several of the levers and the helices and wings began to move, when with a sudden rush the Flying Fish shot up in the air through the opened roof of the shop.

CHAPTER III.

SAVED.

The first movement about the boat had been a sudden spreading out on either side of the arched, bat-like wings; with a metallic click they became rigid at a width of twenty feet on either quarter and twice that length, and with the first beat they lifted the boat.

The helices revolved so rapidly that they fairly whistled, yet the lifting power was so evenly grated between the wheels and wings that not the slightest oscillation, tremor or gyrating movement could be felt.

The boat lay as stiff and even as if she were upon the land. Fritz glanced over the railing, down upon the policeman and citizens who had been pursuing him, and saw them gaping up at the receding boat in open-mouthed astonishment.

All the streets, windows and housetops in Wrightstown were lined with people, and cheer after cheer arose from the multitude when the boat was seen; handkerchiefs and flags were waved, and a scene of the most intense excitement ensued.

"Come in here, Fritz!" shouted the boy inventor, as he clutched the wheel and keenly watched every movement of the airship.

Schneider obeyed, and Jack saw that he had cleaned himself of the tar.

"Och, himmel!" he gasped, as he glanced around. "Vot iss?

I feel me so kveer as nefer vhas alretty, and if dot poat don't plo' up by idself, or ve don't fell down, I tink ve vhas go up by kingdom come, don't id?"

"You needn't be alarmed," reassuringly said Jack. "She is going all right. It's just like ballooning. Just hear Tim—he's vomiting in the cabin, and yet he never got seasick on the water in his life."

He glanced at the registers and saw that they were at a height of 500 feet from the earth, ascending at the rate of sixty feet a minute, and were slipping off at an angle with the wind to the north-eastward.

"I vish I vhas back by der landt," groaned Fritz, in scared tones.

"You'd get arrested if you was. What was the reason they were chasing you and trying to arrest you, Fritz?" said Jack.

"A crowd vhas bushin' in by der yardt, und I tolt 'em ter got oudt, but dey vhasn't do id, so I crabbed der hose oudt er der gardner's handts, und I vhas squated it at 'em, und der vater smeshed der bolicemans in de eye. Dot seddled id. He wanted to haf me hung righd away gwick, und all der beebles vot I soused vould a-bulled by der rope if dey vhas caught me vonct, so I skoodeded, und dots der reason dey vhas shased me alretty."

Just then the old sailor came limping in, and remembering what he had done to anger him, Fritz scowled and wobbled toward him.

The ancient mariner was deathly pale from a sort of sickness produced by his strange position, and looked very forlorn.

"Wot are yer a-going fer do, Dutchy, kill me?" he moaned.

"Donner vetter! How yer can ask dot questions? Of gourse I vhas!" replied Fritz, belligerently, as he doubled up his fist.

A sickly smile crossed Tim's face.

He was so awful sick he didn't care much for existing.

Taking an axe from a rack he handed it to Schneider.

"Heave ahead, my lad!" said he. "Yer couldn't do me a greater favor."

"Och, shust—wow—wow—york—york—york!" replied Fritz.

He, too, was turning pale, and suddenly pressed one hand over his gagging mouth and the pit of his heaving stomach.

"Wot?" growled Tim, as the Dutch boy dropped the axe.

"I vhas—ugh—york—york—gah—um—wow!" replied Fritz.

The angry look left his bulging blue eyes and a most unhappy expression, pitiful to behold, crept over his fat face.

It was a bilious, startled, what-ails-me sort of an expression.

He then cast an eye on the door and sidled toward it, with his cheeks puffed up, his stomach heaving up and down and his legs wobbling.

The next moment out he rushed, pursued by Tim, and they both leaned over the railing and began a duet of gags.

Jack laughed, for he was not affected like that, although he felt rather queer, a tingling sensation was running through him, a roaring sound came into his ears and his sight became blurred a little. He soon got over this feeling, however.

So did Tim and Fritz, presently, but animosity was forgotten.

The Flying Fish by that time was a thousand feet in the air, and the people below were apparently so small that they looked like flies, the landscape of coast, land and ocean lost its natural aspect, and they found themselves among some clouds.

It was at this juncture that Jack suddenly observed several huge birds rising from the earth below them, and taking his glass from the rack he directed it at them.

"Two eagles, and one pursuing the other!" he muttered.

A moment afterward he observed that the biggest bird in advance had a tiny infant clutched in its talons.

"Great heaven, boys, look there!" he cried, pointing down at it.

Tim and Fritz were startled at the sight.

"Lord save us, is it a little kid's corpse?" queried Tim.

"No! Don't yer see dot it vhas mofin its arms und legs?" cried Fritz.

The birds were sweeping up toward the Flying Fish, but swerved off as soon as their keen eyes detected what it was.

"Stand by to save the child!" shouted Jack, electrifying his friends.

He slackened the speed of the whirling helices, and brought the boat to a pause, the forward wings were stopped, the action of the after ones was increased, and the cutter made a dive down at a slight angle, when the stern propeller began to spin, shooting her ahead at a wonderful rate of speed.

Away she went, skimming, till she was beneath the eagle that held the child, when the bird took fright and sped away toward the sea, with a fearful screech.

Jack sent the boat flying after it like a rocket.

An exciting chase followed, the eagle straining every effort to get away from the boat, and Jack determined to overtake it. The other eagle flew away in terror.

On swept the bird at the extent of its speed, when Jack turned several levers, and with a whistling of the wings, helices and propellers, the Flying Fish's speed was increased.

"We are gaining!" shouted Jack, excitedly.

"Hurroar!" bellowed Tim, delightedly.

"In vun minute more ve vhas got him!" yelled Fritz.

"Look out the bird don't drop the child!"

"Ay, ay, lad!"

"Shiminey! put on more speed!"

The eagle was now soaring above the airship, and Jack suddenly raised her several yards, when the boat darted ahead, and the child suddenly was released and fell.

With one spring Fritz landed beneath it, his quick glance having instantly detected the little one falling.

Down it came, the delicate fabric of its clothes having caught for an instant upon the bird's sharp talons, and up went the Dutch boy's arms.

With a slight shock the child fell into the arms of Fritz, and, uttering a cry of affright, the eagle circled off to the right.

"Saved!" gasped Jack, in joyful tones.

"Und id vhas alive!" chuckled Fritz, for the child screamed.

"Bless its heart fer that squall!" roared Tim, relieved of his anxiety.

The babe was not injured, excepting for a few scratches inflicted upon its tender skin by the bird's talons, and it now began to bawl and kick lustily as the Dutch boy gently carried it up to the pilot-house, followed by Tim.

"By shiminey!" exclaimed Fritz, as he went in, "it vhas a nigger baby!"

"No, it isn't," replied Jack, regarding it intently; "it's a gypsy."

"Wot! One o' ther gang wot's camped in ther woods by ther bay?" asked Tim.

"It must be. Look at its clothing," said Jack.

The child was only a few weeks old, and very small. Its skin was almost as dark as a mulatto's; its hair was coarse and black, and it did not have very much clothing in.

The little fellow, marvelously enough, did not seem to be much the worse for its perilous adventure, but he cried and screamed, despite Jack saying, "Coochy-coochy-coo;" and chuckling it under the chin.

The eagles disappeared by this time, and having adjusted the levers Jack sent his boat downward in vast circles toward the sea, which was rolling below where they were now suspended.

The driving screws were stopped, the wings stood stiffly out, acting like parachutes, and the helices revolved slower.

With a graceful motion the boat went down at about two

feet a second, and Fritz laid the child down upon a cushion in back of Jack, and tried to stop its yells.

The young inventor kept his glance fixed upon the gauges and indicators, intently, and said:

"The boat seems to work like a charm. I'll bring her to a stop in the water of the bay which is just below us now and we'll go over to the gypsy camp and see if that young one wasn't stolen from there by the eagle. It's a wonder to me it wasn't killed!"

"Thar wuz another eagle a-chasin' ther one as had ther kid," said Tim, "an' that's why ther critter flew so high ter escape its pursuers, I s'pose."

Down, down, down, lower and lower went the boat until at last it came within fifty feet of the sparkling waters of the bay, when the aeronauts saw the people of the village come flocking down to the water's edge and heard them loudly shouting and cheering.

At that moment the wheels suddenly stopped.

A shower of glaring electric sparks shot out from every terminal of the mechanism, and the airship fell.

Cries of alarm burst from the vast multitude.

A sudden shock passed through Jack and his friends when they felt the boat falling from beneath them.

"Hang on for your lives!" shrieked the startled boy.

Their faces blanched, their hearts throbbed, and their nerves tingled but they scarcely had time to move, when with a terrible shock the boat struck the water and splashed it up all around.

The next instant the Flying Fish disappeared under the bay!

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

Two seconds had scarcely elapsed before the airship again arose to the surface and floated as gracefully and buoyantly as any craft.

Fritz and Tim had been knocked flying across the pilot-house and lay in the corner, half stunned; but Jack had grasped the babe and flung himself upon the cushions.

He was badly shaken up, but suffered no injury, nor was the child hurt in consequence of his protecting arms.

He bounded to his feet, drenched by the water that poured in through the open windows, and seeing the electricity still escaping he instantly shut off power, stopping it.

Out from the shore put every available boat, into which many of the spectators of the catastrophe crowded, and a cheer pealed from every mouth when they saw the Flying Fish ascend to the surface and float safely.

"Get up, boys, get up!" exclaimed the boy upon seeing the boat floating again.

Neither of his friends answered him.

For they were senseless.

Jack hastened out on deck with the child in his arms.

He cast a glance around and gave a start of dismay, for he saw that the shock had broken several of the helices, snapped the belt and wheels and created other serious damage to the boat.

A cheer went up from the spectators upon seeing that he was safe, and scores of boats came surging across to the airship, every one asking if they were hurt and begging to be of service.

It was very evident that the machinery was injured, and the boat could not go, so the boy shouted:

"Tow us up the creek to the workshop. I'll fling you a hawser."

He sent a line flying overboard, after laying the gypsy

baby down on the sofa in the pilot-house, and made the other end fast to a ringbolt.

While his friends were dragging the Flying Fish across the bay, he glanced at Tim and Fritz and saw that they were recovering.

He then passed back into the cabin.

It was a beautifully appointed room, but the pictures were knocked from the walls, the table and chairs were upset, the floor was littered with broken articles, and everything was in confusion.

Back of this room was a stateroom, equally as much upset, and in the galley, behind it, scarcely a piece of crockery, glassware or tinware remained unbroken in its place.

There was a storeroom back of the galley, filled with extra things, such as most vessels carry, a fine assortment of fire-arms and ammunition of a kind such as the boy had invented, peculiar-looking diving cotumes, canned food and numerous other things.

But everything was scattered about in the wildest disorder.

The aftmost compartment was an electric machinery room, furnished with a light, powerful engine, run by hydraulic pressure, which operated a beautiful dynamo, from which electricity was generated to work the delicate but complicated machinery which was put into communication with the working parts of the boat by a series of insulated wires, metallic belts and light pistons.

As everything here was stationary, nothing was broken by the shock, although when the boy looked for the cause of the stopping of the helices he soon found that the main shaft had broken.

A trap door in the floor led down into the hold by means of a ladder, and as everything was lighted by incandescent electric lights, the boy procured an illumination of the dark hold by pressing a button on the wall.

He then descended a light ladder of steel.

The entire interior of the hull was empty, excepting for a small, light but powerful air pump standing in the stern.

All around were great braces and girders of a shape denoting extraordinary lightness and strength, as if to resist a collapse of the hull from outside pressure, although the pressure employed really was inside, as will be shown presently, when we explain the use of the pumps.

There was no damage done to the hull, Jack saw at a glance. He then returned to the pilot-house and found that Tim and Fritz had recovered consciousness and were looking for him.

They both had been roughly shaken up and badly bruised, but otherwise had suffered no serious injury by their fall.

Jack questioned them and then explained the boat's condition.

By the time he got through the Flying Fish reached the foot of his grounds; Jack thanked the boatmen and, explaining that no one was hurt, he had his workmen pull the boat into the shop.

"It will take us a week to repair the damage," he told his friends, "but I don't mind that as long as we have all come out of the scrape with whole skins. Had we fallen from a greater height or not dropped into the water, I don't know what would have become of us!"

"Keelhaul me if I want ter try it!" said Tim, with a wry look.

"This youngster must have been born to get hung," laughed Jack as he picked the dark-faced little fellow up and carried him ashore.

They left the workshop and entered Jack's elegant house, when a servant announced a gentleman named Peleg Hopkins.

"What!" exclaimed Jack, in delight. "My old friend, the professor, here? Send him in at once. I'll be delighted to see him!"

It was the same man the gypsy queen had fooled.

He had gone on a voyage with Jack and his friends, and was therefore a very welcome guest among them now.

The boy laid the gypsy child on the sofa in his library, into which they had repaired, and when the professor came in they gave him a most cordial reception.

"So sorry I missed the trial trip, dear boy," said Hopkins wiping his glasses; "but when I saw the accident which befel you I really cannot say I regretted it much, after all."

"Lor, professor," said Tim, with a grin, "don't mention regrets, 'cause yer know very well as we all wishes yer wuz along with us!"

"Oxbecially when ve fell into der vater," modestly admitted Fritz.

"Ay, now; it made me think o' ther time I was aboard o' ther cannon-ball express, a-goin' at the rate o' sixty knots an hour atween Sailors' Snug Harbor an' Tompkinsville," said Tim. "That wuz a ride fer yer. We was a-goin' down grade, an' ther engine runned away. We went so fast that ther draught o' ther flyin' train tore up trees an' rocks, knocked down houses and telegraph poles, an' finally, after traveling two hours, an' leavin' a path mowed down like a cyclone track——"

"Two hours, sixty miles an hour between Sailors' Snug Harbor and Tompkinsville?" asked the professor, with a suspicious look at Tim, and then he made a move to sit down on the sofa, when a yell from the gypsy child lying beneath, caused him to jump up as if he was shot. "Great heaven!" he gasped, looking over his shoulder in astonishment at the child. "What's that—where did you get it?"

The diversion came just in time to stop Fritz flinging an ottoman at Tim for getting off such an infamous lie, and they all laughed.

Jack thereupon explained the matter to the professor.

Hopkins was very much amazed over the marvelous rescue, and warmly congratulated the boy.

"Do you know," said he, carefully examining the waif of the air, "that I have seen that child somewhere before?"

"Wasn't it among the gypsies in the woods?"

"Sure enough!" said the professor, with a start. "Now I recollect! It was the queen's child, my Christian friend. The last time I beheld the unfortunate little rascal he was lying upon a cushion at the tent entrance, while the mother told my fortune."

"Told your fortune? How superstitious of you, professor! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Oh, you may laugh, Wright, but that woman is a wonder!" said the professor, emphatically. "She told me the most wonderful things, which I knew to be true, but of which she could most certainly have had no cognizance previously. Let me explain."

Jack listened to his narrative, attentively.

"But I got no letter saying you was coming," said he, when Hopkins finished.

"You didn't?" queried the professor in surprise. Then he pondered a moment and burst out with: "By Jove! now I recollect, I didn't send it; forgot to mail it, dear boy. I remember finding the letter in my pocket and taking it out near the gypsy camp, and—but let me see—where did I put it?"

He felt in all his pockets, a blank look upon his face.

"It's lost!" he exclaimed, presently.

"That explains the mystery, then," laughed Jack.

"What mystery?"

"The gypsy's knowledge of you and your affairs which she told in your fortune."

"How do you mean?"

"She must have found the letter, read it, and thus acquainted herself with your name, intentions and so forth, and simply repeated it to you."

"By thunder!" gasped the discomfited professor, emphatic-

ly. "As she told me no more than she could have gleaned from the letter, I believe your theory is right, Jack!"

A general laugh followed this simple explanation of what had seemed a wonderful mystery to the learned professor.

"We can ascertain the truth when we return her child," said Hopkins, in deep mortification when he realized how clearly he had been duped.

"And that will be to-night," said Jack. "I suppose you will stay with us a while, professor?"

"I came expressly to make an aerial voyage with you in your new invention," replied Hopkins. "Have you planned a trip yet?"

"Then you must remain here," said Jack. "We have no definite views settled for the present, but I have no doubt that as soon as the boat is repaired I shall have an object arranged for a trip on the wing and in the air. In the meantime make yourself at home, sir."

A short time afterward a tasteful supper was served up, and as Jack had changed his clothes he wrapped the gypsy child up in a shawl, and, accompanied by Hopkins, they set out for the gypsy encampment in the woods.

CHAPTER V.

A GYPSY MOTHER'S GRATITUDE.

The moon and stars had arisen in the clear sky by the time Jack and Hopkins reached the woods bordering one side of the bay, with the gypsy child.

They pursued a dark, gloomy path bordered with a dense hedge, as Jack was perfectly familiar with every inch of the ground, and had just arrived at the most lonesome spot when they became aware that there were stealthy footsteps following them.

Glancing back over his shoulder the boy's quick, keen eyes saw the shadowy figure of a man slinking along in among the bushes, like a phantom, and he nudged Hopkins and whispered: "We are being followed, professor."

"Oh, Lord!" gasped Hopkins, who was a very timid man. "Where is he?"

"In back of us, lurking among those bushes."

"Do you suppose it is a robber?"

"Very likely a footpad."

"What shall we do?"

"Pay no attention to him."

"But he may kill us. Let us run."

"Not on your life! Keep right along with me."

The professor's teeth began to chatter, and he turned very pale, while he grasped Jack's coat with one trembling hand, and every few moments he cast a frightened glance backward over his shoulder.

"What did I venture to come for?" he groaned.

"Silence! Do you hear him coming now?"

"Yes—yes. The scoundrel is drawing nearer every moment."

"Don't you be afraid. He won't hurt us."

"Who's afraid?" said Hopkins, indignantly. "I'm sure I ain't, for—oh, help! Murder! Police! Fire! Thieves! Save me! Spare me!"

Just then their pursuer came gliding up behind them and the sharp click of a pistol spring caused Hopkins to yell and fall on his knees.

Jack wheeled around and saw their pursuer close behind him with a pistol in his hand aimed at them.

"Silence, you old fool!" he hissed. "Do you want me to kill you?"

"Mercy on my soul!" gasped the professor. "He means murder, dear boy!"

"Well," coolly asked Jack of the man, "what do you want?" "That bundle in your arms and your valuables!" replied the stranger.

"You are one of the gypsies, I see by your clothes, who are camped in these woods."

"That's neither here nor there!" snarled the man. "Shell out!"

"And if I refuse you mean to shoot me?" demanded Jack.

"That's the alternative."

"Blaze away, then!"

"What! Do you dare refuse?"

"Of course I do."

"You seal your own death warrant."

"Bosh! you can't hurt me."

"You'll see! Choar a chauvie!" (Rob that person!) he yelled. "Sellah jaw drom!" (Curse you, take the road!)

The man uttered a peculiar whistle as he spoke, and out from the shrubbery started half a dozen more gypsies, surrounding Jack.

Every one of them held a pistol aimed at the boy.

"Stop!" yelled Hopkins, in agonized tones, as he raised his clasped hands beseechingly. "Don't fire, gentlemen! I'll give you all I've got!"

"Not if I know it!" said Jack, grimly.

He unfastened the shawl from around the child and it began to cry.

Holding it up in plain view, at a spot where the moonlight streamed down through the trees, he held a pistol to its head and cried:

"If you don't clear out I'll blow this child's head off!"

"The queen's infant!" ran from mouth to mouth, as the dark-visaged men recognized it, in deep wonder.

Every one of them had seen the eagle carry the infant away, and they were now intensely astonished to see it safe back on land in Jack's hand, apparently uninjured.

It was to them a marvelous mystery.

At this juncture Zobeide appeared, attracted by the noise, and with one glance saw what was transpiring.

A wild, piercing shriek burst frantically from her lips when she beheld her child, so miraculously saved, in Jack's hands.

She and the whole tribe had long before given it up as dead, and she rushed forward into the circle of thieves, screaming:

"My child! My child!"

With outstretched arms she rushed toward Jack, but the boy recoiled, and aiming his pistol at her, he said, sternly:

"Unless you drive those scoundrels away I shall kill it!"

"Give it to me! It is mine!" she shrieked, fiercely.

Her savage ferocity was aroused to the pitch of madness at the fear of harm befalling her offspring, saved, as it was, in a strange manner, from an almost certain death.

"Hold!" ringingly answered Jack. "Obey me, and you shall have it."

She paused, her bosom heaving tumultuously, her large, dark eyes glaring like live coals, and a terrible look on her face.

"Harm it at your peril!" she yelled, in a mad paroxysm.

"Listen!" replied Jack. "I just saved it from death, and I was bringing it back in safety to you when your men tried to rob us!"

That brought her to her senses.

She was stung by her followers' base ingratitude.

Knowing, therefore, that the babe was safe, she turned in a fury upon the men and raved like an insane person.

"Away with you! Away, I say, or my curse shall fall on every one! By the dawn of day ye shall all lie with throats cut from ear to ear!"

The awful tones she assumed sent a chill through Jack, and the men seemed to feel sure her dire threat would be kept, for like whipped dogs the slunk away, and one by one they disappeared into the bushes as mysteriously as they came.

In a moment Jack and Hopkins were alone with Zobeide, and the woman bounded forward with a glad cry; the boy placed her wailing child in her arms and she smothered it with kisses, caresses and the most extravagant terms of endearment, in the delirious joy pervading her over recovering her loved offspring.

It was some time before her impetuous overflow of exhilarated feelings abated, and the professor gingerly arose to his feet and kept warily and uneasily glancing furtively around at the rustling bushes, as if he half expected to see the robbers return.

As soon as the wild gypsy queen's joy had abated somewhat, she turned to Jack, and kissing his hand impulsively, again and again, while tears of gratitude streamed from her eyes, she said:

"I recognize you as the Wizard of Wrightstown, and while I am glad to the heart's core for the great good you have done me, I can only reward you with a mother's wondrous love and thanks."

"Don't mention it," bluntly said Jack.

"But, I pray you tell me," she pleaded, greatly mystified, "how was it possible that my child, carried into the heavens by a thievish eagle, and disappearing from our view in the air, was saved?"

"You perhaps are aware that I invented a flying machine?"

"Ay, to-day we saw you ascend."

"During our flight we encountered the eagle, and wrested your child from its grasp in mid-air, after a battle."

"Wonderful! Strange! A miracle!" murmured Zobeide.

"It was unbecoming of your men to trespass upon my own ground, and here try to rob us," said Jack, "more especially as we were bent upon an errand of good to them. By to-morrow you must leave these grounds. If you are not gone by midday I shall have the men put under arrest."

"Pardon them," implored the queen, deeply mortified. "They are the worst of my tribe, and I blush with shame for them. Be assured that by to-morrow we will leave in shame and sorrow. I allow no robbery among my people if I can help it. But the men, unwatched, are bound to transgress. I deeply regret that we brought them from India with us."

"Then you come from India?"

"We are Egyptians, but we have been all over the world. I am educated. I had to be to tell fortunes; but it reminds me—if you are going to India with your strange balloon ship I might show you how you could there gain a most wonderful fortune."

"A fortune?" questioned Jack interestedly.

"Buried far down out of reach of mankind within the crater of an extinct volcano, at the top of an almost inaccessible mountain."

"With my new boat access to such a place would be easy. But this fortune?"

"It is a great diamond mine, exposed by the action of the volcano in ancient times."

"How do you know, if it isn't accessible to mankind?" sharply asked Jack.

"My father, now dead, once ascended the crater top, and dropped by accident a piece of raw meat down into the volcano. A bird carried it up from the bottom, but, frightened by my father, dropped the meat. Adhering to it were a number of precious diamonds, uncut, but valuable. By repeating the experiment he gathered many more. Glancing down on a bright sunny day, he saw that the volcano bed was strewn with many more gems. He then left there."

"By why didn't he return for the rest?"

"Because a convulsion of nature by an earthquake made it impossible for mankind to reach the summit of the mountain again without some such contrivance as your airship, though

there are millions of dollars worth of gems yet lying at the bottom of that extinct crater."

"And you have the secret of its location?" queried Jack eagerly.

"I have; and if it will show you my gratitude in a small way for what you have done, you may have it, and here it is."

As Zobeide said this she unfastened a large locket of gold from around her neck, handed it to Jack and glided away.

"But, I say, my good woman," said the professor, "how about the fortune you told me this even— Ha! She's gone!"

"And left a secret with me worth millions!" said Jack.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOUNTAIN MINE OF INDIA.

It was too dark to examine the locket which the gypsy queen had placed in Jack's hand, until they got out of the woods, and as they had no desire to meet the thieves again they hurried away.

The professor was an old traveler, and as they went along he said:

"If such a diamond mine exists outside of that nomad's imagination, my boy, you can depend that it will yield the biggest, purest and finest gems in the world, if it is located in India."

"Why," said Jack, "do you know anything about them?"

"I ought to, as I've been all through the diamond fields on the eastern side of the Deccan, from the Pennar River in 14 degrees north latitude to near the Sone, in Bundelkund, at 25 degrees north latitude. When I was there the southern mines were at Cuddapah, Karnul and Ellore, near the Krishna, in Madras presidency. In this district some of the largest diamonds ever obtained were procured."

"How about the famous Golconda, sir?" queried Jack.

"It is only a fortress and ruined city, dear boy, situated in the Nizam's dominions, seven miles west of Heyderabad city. It was once a powerful kingdom, which arose on the downfall of the Bahamani dynasty. The diamonds of Golconda obtained great celebrity; they were, however, merely cut and polished there. The fortress is situated on a rocky ridge of granite, is very extensive, and contains many inclosures. It is strong and in good repair, but is commanded by the summits of the enormous and massive mausoleum of the ancient kings about 600 yards distant. These buildings are grouped in an arid, rocky desert. The fort is now the Nizam's prison and treasury."

"How do they get these Indian diamonds?"

"Chiefly in the recent deposits, beds of sand and clay, and in some places a ferruginous sandstone—very few in the original matrix. The upper strata of the beds is 18 inches of sand, gravel and loam; next there is a stiff deposit of black clay or mud, about four feet thick; and next the diamond bed, which is distinguished by a mixture of large, round stones, two or three feet thick, closely cemented together with clay. Hollow pits are there excavated a few feet in diameter, in such spots as the practice of the miner dictates. He sinks a few feet, searches the bed, and if not encouraged by a find, shifts his position to dig again."

Talking thus, they soon reached the town, and restraining their curiosity they proceeded at once to Jack's house.

Finding Tim and Fritz in the parlor, they told them what occurred, and Jack withdrew the big golden locket.

It looked very much like a plain, polished watch case, on which was engraved in old Egyptian characters:

Bura Rajah a Beenie Raunie.

It meant in the Hindoostanee gypsy tongue, The King to the Queen, and upon opening the locket, Jack saw that it contained a small circular piece of parchment just fitting the pocket, upon which was inscribed in half-faded characters an inscription like this:

HIMMALEHS, THIBET.

Deodhunga Mountain Crater,
Khatmandu, Sikim, Tassisdun,
Diamonds.
29,002 feet.

Highest Known Mountain of the Globe.

There was nothing else written upon the parchment, and all of our friends were very much disappointed at the meager account.

Fritz and Tim, indeed, could not understand what the words meant until Jack said:

"There isn't much satisfaction to be gained from all we can learn here. The words at the top must mean that it is located in the Himalaya Mountains, separating Northern India from Thibet, and the crater of the mentioned Deodhunga lies above the city of Sikim, between Khatmandu and Tassisdun. The numerals define the height of the mountain, and, as the next line says, it is the biggest mountain in the world."

"Oh!" ejaculated the Dutch boy and the old salt in one breath.

"Truly, it's a disappointingly meager account," said the professor, with a very glum look crossing his narrow face.

"You recollect what Zobeide told us about her father finding the treasure?"

"Very well, indeed, my worthy youth, but we only have her word for it."

"Gypsies are such liars and general rogues," admitted Jack, "it is hard to trust them. Yet see how she guarded this paper. Would she do it if there wasn't any importance attached to it? Recollect how grateful she was to me. At such a moment she would not deceive or cheat her deadliest foe, for she was gushing with gratitude, and certainly wanted to repay me for saving her child's life. Hence I believe her."

"Wait," said the professor quietly. "Don't forget that this is the very highest mountain in the world, my boy. It rises high above the snow line, and its apex is in a region colder than that in which man can live. Mosses, berries, birch and barley are all that can grow there; bears, yak and Pamir sheep find it hard to live in such a frigid zone, and very few birds venture as high as the snow belt, fifteen thousand feet up."

"Isn't the snow line of Mt. Everest, as Deodhunga is called, peculiar?"

"Much different than that of any other mountain," replied the professor, glancing at a globe. "The snow line on its north face begins at 20,000 feet height, while on the south it commences at less than 15,000."

"How do you account for the difference?"

"The action of the cold, strong north winds——"

"But there is another theory which I have, Mr. Hopkins."

"What do you allude to?"

"Volcanic action heating the mountain on the Thibet side."

"Perhaps you are right. Internal heat could keep the north side of the mountain free from snow all the way to the top, and give free passage to an explorer, if he desired to venture the climb up into the rare upper atmosphere which man finds so hard to breathe."

"You admit, then, that there may be some truth in the gypsy's verbal description and the evidence of this piece of paper?"

"Of course. We had better question her further to-morrow,

however, for I see, Wright, that if this paper is genuine you contemplate making a trip across the sea to India, in search of this diamond mine."

"Such is the thought uppermost in my mind, sir."

"It is a long way to go, and a dangerous journey," said the professor cautiously, "and you may go chasing a phantom, for this mine with its impossible situation is very likely a myth. To attempt such a journey on the strength of such clues as these seems absurd."

"On the other hand," said Jack, "I am going to take a vacation and go on a long trip in my airship, both to thoroughly try it and enjoy myself with the hazardous adventures which generally arise from such a journey. Now, it don't make any difference to me if I go to India or the South Pole, except that the former place is probably the easiest to reach. In order to have some object in view to liven up my trip, I'm going to let myself believe Zobeide's story and go in search of the fabulous treasure she has described."

"If you put it in that light, that's different," laughed the professor.

"We will simply call it a trip in search of adventure, that's all," said Jack; "and if we can manage to squeeze a round sum of money out of it, why, so much the better for our pocketbooks. Eh, boys?"

"I tink so, neider," grunted Fritz.

"Then yer a-goin' ter tack fer Indy?" queried Tim.

"Yes. Are you going with us, professor?"

"With all my heart, dear friend," replied Hopkins heartily.

The four friends soon afterward separated and retired for the night.

On the following morning after breakfast, Jack and Hopkins walked over to the woods to get details of the matter from the gypsy queen, but was disappointed to find that she and her tribe were gone.

Acting upon Jack's threat to have her friends arrested, she had broken up the camp the night previously, and they silently stole away in the darkness, and never were seen or heard of again anywhere near Wrightstown.

Jack sent messengers in every direction to find them, but to his disgust they returned without having found any trace of the nomads, so he had to abandon all hope of learning anything more about the diamond mine of the Himalayas.

The boy then directed his attention to repairing his boat.

The Flying Fish had been badly shattered by her fall into the water, and it was necessary to make duplicate parts of the broken machinery.

It occupied considerable time to do this, but he was ably assisted by his friends, and they managed at the end of two weeks to not only repair the airship, but to improve upon her.

Every defect which Jack had noticed about her during the trial trip was now remedied, and the cutter was a much better boat than she had been before the accident.

As soon as she was finished, they stocked her with provisions, equipments suited to the kind of a journey they purposed to go on, and with their business affairs in perfect order, they embarked.

The boat ran down the creek into the bay at nightfall, when the residents of the town were wrapped in slumber, and passing out on the rolling Atlantic she was headed for Europe.

With wings folded at her sides, helices unmovable, and her screw rapidly revolving, the air cutter shot through the watery element with the speed of a swordfish and the grace of a swan.

Jack and Tim were at the wheel, and Fritz and Hopkins lay in their bunks dreadfully seasick.

And as the gallant Flying Fish dashed through the moonlit waves the young inventor turned to the old sailor and said:

"I have a feeling that we are on our most dangerous cruise,

Tim, but if we live to come back, we will all have a barrel of mōney, I am sure."

CHAPTER VII.

HARPOONING A WHALE.

On the following morning, about seven o'clock, Tim stood in the pilot-house on one leg, his solitary eye fastened upon the compass, and his hands upon the wheel, when a shrill voice behind him yelled:

"Hard-a-port! Man overboard!"

"Jerusalem!" gasped Tim, rousing from a reverie with a start.

Around spins the wheel like lightning, the electric cutter diverged from its course, and with an anxious look upon his rugged face the old sailor peered out of the window to see who fell overboard.

"Ha, ha, ha! What a fool! What a fool!" chuckled the shrill voice again.

"Thunder!" growled Tim, glancing around in disgust. "It's that cussed Bismarck!"

On the floor behind him stood a handsome green parrot, who was chuckling and muttering to itself in evident delight.

The creature was Fritz's pet, he having caught it in Africa some time previous.

Tim got very angry at the clever manner in which he had been duped.

"Blast yer timbers!" he roared, scowling at the bird. "Untoggle yer fore to'gallant-bowlines, an' go about thar afore I run afoul o' yer lower studdin' sails! Veer off—d'yer hear me?"

"Ah, go chase yourself!" retorted the parrot, gravely, as it cocked its head on one side, and peered at Tim with one red eye.

"Holy bobstays!" shouted Tim, getting deeply aggravated, "I'll carry away yer fore riggin' wi' one punch o' my game leg, yer sassy ole half-breed cockatoo."

He made a terrible kick at Bismarck, but the parrot nimbly hopped out of his way, and Tim turned a somersault in the air and landed upon the seat of his trousers with a bang.

He saw stars.

His rage was increased.

"Whiskers!" he roared.

A chattering howl responded.

"Come here, goldurn ye, an' chaw ther tail o' this bloody son-of-a-gun inter gun waddin'!" howled Tim, struggling to his foot again.

Through the door leading from the cabin rushed a little red monkey belonging to Tim, which he, too, had captured in Africa.

Tim had taught his pet a great many tricks, and among them a hatred for Fritz and his intelligent, educated parrot.

With a spring Whiskers landed upon the parrot, and doubling up his fists in the most approved style of boxing, he squared off and began to punch the parrot, right and left.

Bismarck got mad, ruffled up his feathers and began to yell.

"Murder! Murder!" shrieked he as he caught a whack in the neck and rolled over and over across the room.

"Go fer the lubber!" cheered Tim, a grin overspreading his face as he grasped the wheel again. "Knock blazes out o' his ornary hulk, yer leetle red-headed swab. If yer don't, dash me if I don't lick you!"

A shriek like a rusty steam whistle pealed from Whiskers' lips.

The parrot flew up in the air out of his reach and grasping the monkey's tail between his sharp bill he began to chew.

Whiskers felt as if a red-hot gimlet was boring into his

long and frowsy appendage, and executed a species of ski dance.

Up in the air he popped, down again he hopped, around and around he whizzed, kicking out right and left, and then he made a break to run.

Startled from his culinary operations in the kitchen by the turmoil, Fritz opened the door and peered in, when up on his head leaped Whiskers, and grasping his hair he began to tug at it.

"Donder und blitzen, dook him off!" roared Fritz, trying to beat the parrot and monkey away. "Somebody get me a gun! Sufferin' Isaacs, vhy don't yer stick a pitchforks dot mongey alretty?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Tim, delightedly. "Looker thar Dutch monkey camer!"

"Dim, yer oldt gorilla, vhy don'd yer helb a feller?"

"How kin I leave ther wheel?"

"Den, by dunder, I vhas bunch dot mongey in der snout mit a carfin' knife. Loog oudt, vunct, or yer vhas seen I liver cut in two!"

He flourished the knife he held, and Whiskers jerked his tail out of Bismarck's mouth, leaped into the cabin and fled, followed by the screeching parrot and the irate young Dutchman.

Jack and the professor came in presently from breakfast, and Fritz relieved Tim of the wheel, while the monkey and parrot had their fight out to a finish in the storeroom.

The sun was shining down brightly, the sea was sparkling in its light, and there was just enough roll on to give the cutter an undulating motion as it forged ahead.

"Hello! What's that huge, dark object athwart our bows?" asked the young inventor, pointing ahead at the glistening water.

It looked like a log floating upon the surface.

Every one glanced at the strange object.

They could not make out what it was at such a distance, but as the boat rapidly drew nearer to it the thing became plainer.

"Driftwood," suggested the professor.

"Seaweed, sir," added Tim.

"Dot looks like a boiler," said Fritz.

"It's a whale!" exclaimed Jack.

"But it's inanimate."

"Lor', sir, 'tain't a-spoutin'!"

"I tink I oughter know a whale."

"Bear down on it, Fritz."

"Yah! Shust see dot. Now id looks like a keg of beer."

"It is a whale. See it spouting!" said Jack.

"Der bung flew oudt. Dot's der froth a-squaitin'," Fritz averred.

It was a whale, however, and a big one, for they now saw that its length was over seventy feet.

"Lor', sir," said Tim, "kin I hev a shot at it?"

"What for?"

"Fun, o' course. Thar's a harpoon aboard."

"Can you handle it?"

"Me? Why, bless 'ee, wuzn't I onct on a three-year whaling v'yage aboard o' ther ship Blubber Pot afore yer wuz borne I reckerlect well one time we wuz among ther ice floes in Baffin's Bay, an' I struck a cow-whale plum amidships as she sounded. Over went ther boat an' out we tumbled, but, s' I grabbed the line an' hung on. When ther whale aruz hauled in an' boarded its back. Away she went, an' there wuz, a-straddlin' her like a race horse, till she struck a iceberg, when—kerchunk!"

"What do you mean by that?" queried the professor, curiously.

"She druv her head ten feet inter ther ice and stuck ther onable ter pull it out agin. Then wot should I do but bo

hole down in her head, fill it wi' powder, light it, an' blow er stuffin' outer her."

"Where did you get the auger, powder and matches if you went overboard?"

"Oh, I don't remember all ther perticklers, but——"

"Rats!" said Fritz, in disgust. "He vhas stuffin' you, berser."

"Wot! Don't yer believe me?" growled Tim, indignantly.

"Of course not," said Jack. "But see, boys, we are almost on the whale now, and if you want to harpoon it you haven't y time to waste gassing, Tim."

The old sailor hastened into the storeroom for the harpoon, while Jack and the professor went out on deck.

By this time the leviathan was but a quarter of a mile away, its gigantic body glistening darkly in the sun's rays as it floated on top of the water, occasionally sending up a jet of vapor, as it paddled itself along at about four miles an hour. Jack and Hopkins went up in the bow, behind the searchlight, and watched the monster, while Tim came out with his net.

The old sailor was delighted.

He weighed the long harpoon in his hand, and stumping over to Jack's side he made the harpoon line fast to a stanchion a back of the anchor hawse-holes.

Then he took up a favorable position in the bow, poised the harpoon and muttered:

"If I don't hit it in ther blubber I'll forfeit my 'lowance o' rog, sir!"

"Very well—aim carefully, Tim," replied the boy.

"Look out—it sees our approach—is going down!" cried Hopkins.

"Gee—whiz!" gasped Tim.

Zipp! went the iron like lightning the next moment, and away it shot from his hand through the air in a bee-line.

True to its mark it struck the whale in the blubber and sank deep into the quivering flesh and fat.

"Hurroar!" yelled Tim, delightedly. "Bull's-eye!"

"A true blow!" smiled Jack, in satisfied tones.

"Careful, there! Stand back, away from the line!" cautioned Hopkins.

The rope attached to the harpoon was coiled on the deck in the bow, and as the whale gave a convulsive tremor and started away rapidly, the line began to uncoil and pay out. Faster and still faster went the whale until it gained a distance of fifty yards from the cutter.

Then it sank below the surface.

Down it shot, with terrible rapidity, into the depths of the sea, the line buzzing over the rail with a loud hum as coil after coil was undone and carried down into the depths.

Just then Jack leaned over the rail to watch its descent, when a flying bight caught around one of his legs as he had his foot raised, and suddenly became taut.

The next instant the boy was jerked overboard and carried along by the line, and was pulled under the sea.

A startled cry pealed from the lips of his friends when they saw what a dangerous accident had occurred to the boy.

"Cut the line!" gasped Hopkins. "He's caught!"

Whiz! went Tim's sheath-knife across the rope.

It parted with a report like a pistol shot and the next instant was whisked down into the water and disappeared.

"Stop ther boat!" roared Tim to the Dutch boy. "My Lord, he's a goner!"

Terrified at Jack's fate, Fritz brought the cutter to a pause.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOTHING, YET LIGHTER THAN AIR.

Down Jack was dragged beneath the water, like a shot, his brain in a whirl from the suddenness of the accident.

He rapidly recovered his presence of mind, however, and found himself strangling, as he scarcely had time to catch his breath.

The boy realized his position in a flash.

Twisting himself around he seized the rope and pulled himself up to it, hoping it would give away if it was slackened, but the snare did not uncoil, but rigidly held on, as the line was wet.

He had a knife in his pocket and felt for it.

All the while he was continuing his descent.

His lungs seemed to be oppressed by a fearful weight, and before his starting eyes there flashed myriads of bright sparks.

Managing to find the knife and open it he cut the line, although he afterwards could not tell how he did it, so confused was he.

The whale continued to sound and Jack began to arise.

A fearful smothering sensation attacked him—he could no longer hold his breath—his mouth opened and he inhaled the salt water instead of air—and then he began to struggle.

A terrible panic seized him.

Then came a spasmodic movement of his arms and legs and a frightful distortion of his face.

For he was drowning!

Up, up, up shot his body toward the surface very rapidly, but it seemed an interminable age to the boy.

Every incident of his life flashed before his mental vision like the fleeting figures of a kaleidoscope vividly, rapidly, yet distinctly.

There came a fearful roaring in his ears, the bright sparks darting through his eyes became more brilliant, a delicious languor seemed to deaden all pain and disagreeable feeling, and he felt as if he were drifting in the air.

Then his body came to the surface.

It seemed as if a fiery bomb had burst in front of him, dispelling the entrancing enchantment he was in as his faculties returned.

Expelling the water from his lungs as his beating limbs kept him upon the surface, he breathed again, stentoriously, and it began to dawn upon his pained mind where he was.

He fancied he heard a voice shout:

"There he is!"

Then he felt something seize and lift him.

He oated beside the Flying Fish, and it was a boat-hook in Tim's hands that caught his jacket in the small of the back.

Not more than one minute had elapsed since he was dragged under the sea, yet it seemed an age to the half-senseless boy.

He found his friends pulling him upon the deck and there he lay, panting and gasping, gagging and throwing up water.

In a short time he began to recover.

"He was nearly drowned," he heard the professor say.

"Ay," replied Tom's voice, "but, thank heaven, he's all right now."

"Fritz, bring out a bottle of whisky."

"Yah!"

"Tim, rub him again."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

A friction began, and presently Jack opened his eyes, the healthy glow returned to his pallid cheeks and he gasped, faintly:

"I'm all right, friends."

"Hoop-la! Trink dese schnapps!" said Fritz.

A bottle was pressed to Jack's lips and he took a deep draught.

The fiery liquid stimulated him rapidly and enabled him to arise.

"Don't bother with me, friends; I'm over it," said he, smiling faintly.

"We thought you were lost, dear boy."

"It seems I am reserved for a worse fate, professor."

"How in blazes did yer unmoor from ther whale?" queried Tim.

"Cut loose with a knife, I think, and then arose."

"Och, dot vhas a gloser shafe as a barber could gief you," said Fritz.

Has the whale come up yet?" queried Jack.

"No. Ther lubber has hooked our harpoon an' line," regretfully said Tim.

"Let him keep it. Start the boat, Fritz."

They questioned each other at some length more, and the Dutch boy put the wheel in motion, starting the cutter ahead.

By noontime Jack was none the worse for his adventure, and in the twelve hours they had been afloat he saw that they had made a total of 485 miles, at forty knots an hour.

The Flying Fish was an extraordinary fast boat, and this no doubt was due in a great measure to her cutter build, as that style of boats is best adapted to rough water.

In the afternoon the boy took an inventory of his equipments, accompanied by the professor, who had not yet seen everything.

There were provisions enough on board to last two months, plenty water, and a machine for distilling fresh from sea water.

As they came to a pause in the storeroom, Hopkins glanced at a small mortar with explosive shells, several small balloons, with the same kind of explosives attached to them, and a gas-making machine.

"What are you carrying those things for, my boy?" he asked.

"Those are rain makers," smiled Jack.

"I don't understand you."

"Well, you see we can't carry any more weight aboard this boat than is absolutely necessary in order to fly it. Now, during the course of our trip we may stand in need of water. Suppose we are in an arid district where it can't be obtained from the earth. All I have to do is to send my explosives up in the heavens and burst them, when down comes the rain in torrents to supply our wants."

"Good! Splendid! And what are these things?"

He pointed at several large, strong-looking pipes that came up through the floor and were attached to a small but powerful air pump.

"A safety valve, to prevent us falling from midair," said Jack, quietly.

"That's queer," said the professor, with a puzzled look.

"Not at all. There's another similar pump down in the hold. Come and see."

He led the surprised professor down into the vast, empty hold, turned on an electric light and showed him the pump.

"I don't understand your theory," said Hopkins. "In the case of an elevator with flanges that fly out and catch in teeth to stop it falling, there is nothing complicated. But I don't understand what you can clutch in the air to stop your descent."

"Why, I clutch the air itself," laughed Jack.

"Then, why didn't you do it during the trial trip when you fell?"

"Simply because this part of the machine wasn't finished."

"Oh; but explain it, will you?"

"Certainly. This pump is to draw air into the hold, and the other one is to suck it out. The principle is easy to understand. Anything lighter than the air will float in the air, won't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, suppose I pump all the air out of the hold, won't that create a vacuum, and isn't a vacuum lighter than the air."

"Yes; but such a terrible suction will keep drawing inward at the inside of the shell of the hull, and it might collapse."

"Such would be the case ordinarily, but cast your eye

around and just see what tremendously strong braces skeleton is."

"True enough. They can resist a fearful pressure."

"I have gauged every inch of it, and know just what it stands," said Jack confidently. "In fact, professor, the vacuum would keep us afloat in the air without the spiral helices and the wing planes at the sides."

"Then you have overcome the earth's gravitation?"

"I have. I have tried and proved it," said Jack.

"In that case it is the most wonderful discovery of the age," enthusiastically said Hopkins.

"Were the helices and wings to lose their functions in the upper atmosphere," said Jack, "if I have a constant void the hull, we will be safer than in a balloon. If the boat loses power, and attempts to fall, if I am quick enough to stop the vacuum, I can use it as a flange or clutch on the air, the same as the safety clutch of an elevator, to stop our descent."

"And can you travel with this vacuum, too?"

"Easily, sir. You shall see a trial in due time. By putting the pump in motion I could lift the Flying Fish right up from the sea now."

"And to descend again?"

"I have only to put the other pumps in motion, and inject little air into the hull to lower it to any desired depth toward the earth again. In ballooning you let out gas to descend while by my arrangement to go down I take in air."

"An ingenious contrivance, surely, but—"

"Hello, Shack! Hello, Shack!" interposed Fritz's voice.

It came through a speaking tube into the room above from the pilot-house, and Jack and the professor ascended the companionway and closed the trap.

"Shack! Shack!"

"What's the matter?" called the boy through the tube.

"Come up here right away gwick, vonct!" came the excited reply.

"Anything gone wrong?"

"Yah! Yah!"

Jack and Hopkins glanced askance at each other for a moment, for they realized by the excited tones of the Dutch boy that something serious had happened.

"Hurry!" said Hopkins, in an awed whisper.

"Follow me, professor," muttered the boy.

Flinging open the door he made a rush for the pilot-house wondering what could have happened, and Hopkins was rushing after him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PIRATE AND THE MACHINE GUN.

The moment Jack reached the pilot-house and cast his glance ahead of the Flying Fish, he saw that a large ship under full sail, was bearing down upon him, firing a gun as it came.

Amazed at this order to haul to, Jack seized a glass, and leveling it at the stranger for a moment, he saw that it was a heavily-armed ship, with a large crew, but had no flag flying.

"Dot feller vhas fire a shot dot ve hauls to," said Fritz in troubled tones.

"What is she—a man-of-war?" questioned the professor anxiously.

"Looks more like a privateer," replied Jack.

"Vot shall I do?" queried Fritz.

"Stop the boat until we find out what they want."

The Dutch boy turned a lever, bringing the cutter to a pause.

As soon as the stranger drew near enough, she hove up into the wind, a boat was lowered from the davits, manned by four sailors and a large man with bushy red whiskers, and came towards the Flying Fish.

"Fling us a rope!" shouted the man in the stern sheets.

Tim was standing out on the forward deck, and glancing at Jack for approval, the boy nodded, and he flung the strangers a line.

Making their quarter-boat fast at the side of the cutter, the big man came up on her deck, and was met by Jack with a salute.

"Well, sir," said Jack, "what do you want?"

The stranger cast a curious glance around, and then asked:

"Can I see the captain of this queer craft?"

"I command this boat," replied Jack quietly.

"What—you—a mere stripling of a boy?" the man exclaimed skeptically.

"Never mind my age; you ordered us to haul to with a war-like signal, and we have complied; now state your business."

A dark scowl settled in an ugly manner over the man's face.

"Don't be so testy, boy," said he. "You will learn my business soon enough. Tell me, what sort of a craft do you call this?"

"A cutter," replied Jack, in curt tones.

"Aye, now, that I can see plainly enough," growled the stranger, as his four men came up on deck and grouped themselves in back of him; "but what I want to know is, what is your business—are you a freighter, passenger, warship, or what?"

"I decline to tell you."

"Oh, you do, hey? Well, my saucy bantam, I shall force you to give me an account of yourself if you aren't more careful."

"Proceed," coolly answered the boy, drawing himself up haughtily. "Until I know who you are, what your object is and who gave you authority to molest us, I won't inconvenience myself enough to tell you anything."

"In that case," said the stranger, "I will speak out. My name is Steve Bonnet, and I have no doubt you have heard of me."

"Ha! You are, then, the infamous pirate chief himself!" said Jack, very much astonished to discover whom he was addressing.

"My object," continued the notorious rascal, "is to capture this queer craft, as I see she is built of metal and is admirably suited to my needs as a sea rover, to consort my other bonnie craft."

"Oh, you wish to wrest her from us, eh?" said Jack.

"Exactly. By the aid of my glass I see you are short-handed—have, in fact, but four men aboard, and I therefore count upon a very easy victory over you. Behold yonder ship?"

"Well, what about it?"

"You see she is heavily armed?"

"That's very apparent."

"Refuse to obey me, and with our guns we will blow you to pieces."

"And what if I agree to submit?"

"Your lives shall be spared and you may join our crew."

"If that's the alternative, I agree," said Jack.

"Good! You are a lad of sense."

"Shake hands on it, Mr. Bonnet."

"With all my heart!"

They clasped hands.

But no sooner had they done so than the pirate uttered a wild yell.

He sprang up into the air and gave a jerk, but was unable to release Jack's hand, for the boy had a small, powerful

electric battery concealed in his pocket, and had charged himself with a strong current.

"Oh!" screamed Bonnet wildly. "Let me go!"

"Calm your agitation, my friend. Why do you excite yourself?" queried Jack.

"Oh! Oh! Curse you! What are you doing to me?"

"There, there! Now don't get so rough. I'm only shaking hands."

"He's killing me! Fire upon the whelp, boys!" roared Steve Bonnet.

The four pirates drew revolvers from the bosoms of their blouses and took deadly aim at Jack, when the boy shouted:

"Fritz, turn lever No. 3!"

Obedying him, the Dutch boy put a current of electricity into the metallic deck and as the sailors were barefooted they got the full benefit of it and fell sprawling ere they could fire.

A chorus of yells pealed from their lips, and they began to squirm.

Jack and his friends wore rubber-soled shoes, and as rubber is a non-conductor of electricity, they did not feel the outside current.

As soon as the deck was alive the boy stopped the flow in his own body, pushed his victim down and left him and his men hopping and dancing up and down, shouting, swearing, pleading and threatening in the most extravagant terms.

He then walked into the pilot-house with Tim.

"Shake yerself thar, lads!" roared the old sailor out of the window, as a ripple of merriment went among his friends. "That's ther ticket! Don't stop! Reg'lar hornpipe they're a-doin'! Sashay ter corners! Cross over! All han's aroun'! Balance partners!"

"Och, du lieber!" roared Fritz, laughing till the tears ran from his eyes. "Dey vhas lookin' like hop-frogs und bull-toads! Shust looker dot bick man! He vhas keebin' dime mit rollin' his eyes und crindin' his teet' alretty! In vun minnit, if I keep me on laughin', I vhas goin' ter bust, sure!"

"Why don't you capture my boat now, Steve Bonnet?" the young inventor laughed. "Have you changed your mind?"

"Stop it!" screamed the pirate. "You are killing us."

"Can't. The machine is wound up to run twenty-four hours," said Jack.

"I can't stand this much longer!" yelled the wretch. "Only let us go and we won't bother you again."

"Then hop over yonder rail into the sea."

The pirate complied, and his men followed him.

There came five splashes, then all was still.

"Shut the electricity off from the deck and start the boat," said Jack.

Fritz reversed lever No. 3, and turned lever No. 1, whereupon the Flying Fish darted ahead, and, glancing back, our friends saw the five men in their rowboat, which they had cut loose from the cutter, pulling for their own ship.

The air cutter was a half mile from the pirate's craft by the time the rascals got aboard, but they began to fire shot after shot after the Flying Fish.

The first one passed clear over the cutter, and striking the sea ahead of it burst with a loud intonation, and a vast upheaval of the water.

"If that shot burst on deck here," said Jack, calculatingly, "it would have blown all these deck houses to pieces, destroyed the machinery and left us a helpless wreck."

"Haven't you got any kind of a gun on board, dear boy?" queried the professor, with a scared look.

"I've got a new invention aboard not much bigger than an ordinary rifle, on wheels, that can fire one hundred shots a minute, each one of which is capable of blowing yonder craft to pieces at a range of fifteen miles!" was Jack's startling reply.

"Then in heaven's name produce it!" said Hopkins, who

was getting badly frightened, as several more cannon-balls came flying about the cutter. "If you don't retaliate we are lost!"

Jack went out on deck, opened a small door in the front of the pilot-house, disclosing a small recess in which stood the gun.

Hauling it out, his friends saw a long, polished tube, the butt of which was surrounded by a bunch of shorter tubes, a lot of complicated yet strong machinery, consisting of cogged wheels, pistons, levers, bolts and magnetic instruments fastened to the breech.

From an ammunition box underneath the boy took a number of copper cylinder-like cartridges, the leaden bullets of which were loaded with a high explosive called horroite, which he compounded.

"It works automatically by turning this crank, like a Gatling or Hotchkiss," explained the boy as he rapidly loaded it, "and as soon as these bullets strike an object they burst inside of it. The effect is a hundred times greater than that of a bombshell."

The pirates' gun kept thundering astern all this while, and a howling shot grazed the side of the cutter, making her quiver.

It sent a cold chill through our friends when far below the water's surface they felt the vibration of the shell bursting.

"Make gwick!" implored Fritz. "Bust der tuyfels ter shiminey!"

Jack sighted the gun by turning a screw very carefully.

Within a dial, like a spirit level, was a delicate oscillating needle which gauged the position and aim of the gun to such a nicety that it could be aimed to strike within an inch.

A telescopic apparatus brought the distant ship into plain view.

"Watch her with the glass," said Jack. "I am going to hit her above the water-line, amidships, on the line with the mainmast."

As he spoke he turned a crank.

There came a terrific howl, but no explosion.

The noise was produced by the flight of a cylinder he discharged from the gun, and the sound kept receding and died away.

They watched the pirate ship intently.

Suddenly there appeared a fearful blowing up of the ship, a thunderous explosion was heard, and a moment later not a vestige of the vessel remained on the sea.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUBMARINE VOLCANO.

Three days after the Flying Fish was off the coast of Portugal without having met with any incident worthy of description.

The professor was constantly taking notes of his observations, and when night's sable mantle fell upon the water he went out on deck with Jack and observed that the sea was vividly phosphorescent.

Wherever it was greatest the brine was colored as red as blood on the surface, and it contained such an immense quantity of little globules that it was as thick as syrup.

Hopkins took up a bucket of the water, and filtering it through a piece of linen he found that it left a mass of globules greater in volume than the water that passed through.

He then viewed them through a magnifying glass, and showed Jack that they presented the appearance of little, transparent, inflated bladders, having on their surface black points.

They were the spawn of fish, and isolated from the water

were highly phosphorescent, the least agitation making them throw out a greenish light, while the water they came from lost its vivid phosphorescence entirely.

"The sea holds in suspension a great variety of solid matter," said Hopkins. "In the first rank are fish which float in the liquid element as birds in the air, while other living creatures have to find a point of support on the submarine soil. The number of floating creatures is enormous, some species congregating in shoals that cover hundreds of square leagues of surface and extend several hundreds of feet thickness in depth."

"Has the volcanic nature of this district anything to do with it?" asked Jack, as the experiment was concluded.

"Considerable, as there is always a disturbing influence going on that drives these masses together about here. The depth between the main and the Cape de Verde Islands averages 10,800 feet; but up from this enormous depth volcanic islands have burst forth in the course of one night."

"I'd like to see such a phenomena," said Jack.

There came a violent concussion below them just then.

"By Jove! you may have your wish gratified!" said Hopkins.

The boy glanced out and saw that the sea was violently agitated about a mile away on their starboard quarter.

The rumbling sounds under the water continued like the approach of distant thunder, vast numbers of bubbles began to arise to the surface, and the water changed color.

A shock rattled the Flying Fish as if she had struck a rock, from an earthquake which had occurred at the bottom.

Within a moment a column of dense black smoke began to arise, and an immense tidal wave suddenly swelled up and went rushing away to the northward, the suction it left behind perceptibly dragging the cutter after it.

"Veer away to the southward!" shouted Jack.

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied Tim, who held the wheel.

The boy saw that if they did not drag the boat away from the influence of the wave its undertow would pull them directly upon the centre of the volcanic action!

Once over the eruption the boat would be torn to pieces.

As the cutter swung around they saw that the sea began to boil, disseminating a fearful heat, which was transmitted to the metal hull of the boat and held by it.

This heat quickly became intensified.

"If the boat gets much hotter," said Jack, in alarm, "we won't be able to stand it upon her. Put on full speed, Tim!"

"Lord save ye, I've got full power on, but she don't make any headway agin this awful current a-pullin' us in the opposite direction!" the old sailor cried, greatly alarmed.

The Flying Fish still kept going backward, drawing dangerously near to the fearful column of smoke.

It had now increased in volume, white smoke mingling with the black, the subterranean rumblings continuing like the discharges of artillery, while thousands of dead fish were seen floating about.

Flames of vivid fire now made openings in the sea, whence issued showers of ignited cinders and stones that shot thousands of feet into the air and fell leagues away.

Streaks of dazzling fire now mingled with the thick cloud of smoke vomited from the sea, with cinders and pumice of such intensity that at a distance of ten miles objects were perfectly plain and a sulphurous, gassy odor filled the air.

Terrestrial volcanoes and earthquakes are nearly always re-echoed from the bottom of the sea, by which our friends inferred that a similar disturbance must then be taking place somewhere on the land.

The noise around the boat was now deafening, and our friends were becoming so uncomfortably hot that their alarm increased.

"It is impossible to move the boat against that current!"

said the professor, who was fearfully frightened, and stood out on deck.

"Then we have but one course to pursue," said Jack.

"And, that?"

"Flight!"

"Sure enough!"

"Let me take the wheel, Tim!"

The boy took command of the boat, and turning several of the levers he put the helices and the forward wings in motion.

As soon as they began to whirl a whistling and oscillating took place, the bow of the boat began to arise from the sea, and pointing skyward at an angle, the cutter shot up from the hot sea into the air, dripping with water.

They were only just in time, for the Flying Fish was rapidly being drawn toward the fiery volcano.

"Hurry!" yelled the terrified professor, dropping on his trembling knees, his face as pale as death. "In one minute we will perish!"

Tim and Fritz came on deck and rushed aft, watching the flames.

Jack retained his coolness and forced the boat to mount faster.

Up into the sky mounted the boat, like a bird, and plunging into the dense smoke she suddenly vanished from the startled gaze of the crew on a distant ship, who were watching the phenomena.

Up, up, up ascended the Flying Fish, still at an angle, until she passed out of the sulphuric smoke of the submarine volcano and entered into the cool upper atmosphere.

Then again our friends breathed freely.

Reaching an altitude of a thousand feet from the sea, Jack slackened the speed of the helices until they revolved just fast enough to hold them at their present height.

He then started the after-screw and sternmost wings.

The Flying Fish assumed a level keel and darted ahead.

In a few minutes the terrifying volcano was below them and far astern, the cutter was in a pure current of air and they made rapid progress to the eastward.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Hopkins, arising, his fears relieved. "We are safe. Dear boy, you are to be complimented for your prompt action."

"I knew very well we wasn't going to go upon the volcano," laughed Jack. "The tidal wave's undertow had greater strength than the boat, though. Fritz, the danger is over, so give us our supper."

"Donner vetter! I vhas yust sayin' me mine brayers," said Fritz.

"Yer'd oughter!" Tim exclaimed. "Thar never wuz a Dutchman yet as didn't have a lot ter answer fer, an' more 'specially you!"

Fritz picked up a belaying-pin and chased Tim inside.

While his three friends were eating, Jack remained at the wheel, and glancing up at the patent log he saw that the cutter was speeding smoothly along at the rate of fifty geographical miles an hour, in a current of wind blowing stiffly from west to east.

In a short time the boy discerned a cluster of lights below.

They shone upon the Portuguese coast in the city of Lagos on the cape St. Vincent, and from there he headed the cutter for Tangiers in Africa to follow the 35th parallel.

The boat was over 5,000 miles from its destination, and it would occupy about four or five days more to complete the distance without stops, at their present rate of speed.

It had been Jack's intention to follow the Mediterranean to the Suez Canal and go down through the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean; but he now changed his mind, as there were too many delays to be met with on the surface of the water.

The moon soon burst out and lighted up the sparkling blue Mediterranean, upon the surface of which the boy could

just distinguish the outlines of steamers and ships, while along the coast line clusters of bright lights could be seen showing the situation of cities on the Spanish and Morocco shores.

Nothing could work better than the machinery of the boat and she proceeded with a stiffness unequalled when on the sea.

The professor relieved the boy at the wheel presently and he had his supper, after which cigars were produced and Jack played euchre in the cabin with Tim and Fritz until it was time to turn in for their trick in berths.

When the next day dawned the boat had made five hundred miles, and was sweeping over the Gulf of Lyons on the French coast.

Jack had just finished his breakfast and was sauntering toward the pilot-house when Tim's voice pealed out in sharp accents:

"Ahoy, Jack, lad, come this way—quick!"

"What do you see?" demanded the boy, hastening in.

"Look yonder—thar goes a balloon!"

"By Jove! And see, Tim, the two men struggling in the car!"

"It's a case o' murder! See ther big lubber wi' a dagger! He's a-tryin' ter stab ther leetle chap! Oh, Lor', he mus' be crazy!"

A short distance away there was a large balloon with a wicker-work car in which two men were fighting for their lives.

"Head the boat for the balloon!" said Jack. "See if we can't overtake them and save that man's life!"

CHAPTER XI.

A TRAGEDY IN MID-AIR.

Caught in a strong current of wind a few yards below the Flying Fish, the balloon was careering as it was swept along, several of the ropes of the net broken and flying, and the two inmates of the car struggling to overcome each other.

Both of them were Frenchmen.

The biggest man was armed with a long-bladed dagger, and while he held his opponent back by the throat with his disengaged hand, he raised his weapon to strike his victim.

In one moment the cruel point would pierce the bosom of the unfortunate fellow and cause his immediate death.

But quicker to act than the murderous wretch, Jack drew a pistol, which he always carried, from his pocket, aimed at the man and fired.

Like the magazine gun, this weapon was noiseless.

But when the bullet burst it gave out a very loud report, and striking the man's knife hand, shattered it to fragments.

A yell of despair pealed from the frantic fellow.

He held aloft his helpless wrist, glared at it with bulging eyes and released the other man, recoiling to the other side of the swaying basket.

This was no sooner done when his victim regained his feet, and picking up a revolver from the floor, aimed it at him.

"It is my turn now, monsieur!" he shouted in French.

"Back! Back with you!" screamed the wounded man, in maniacal tones. "If you dare to fire I shall spring from the car!"

With his uninjured hand he caught hold of one of the ropes and swung himself up on the edge of the basket with cat-like agility.

"Jump, then!" cried the other, in deadly tones. "You thought that by luring me up with you on this aerial flight you might take my life for winning for my wife the girl you

loved. But, Jules Gaspard, I knew what your intentions were ere I came, and was not only prepared for you but eager for this duel. Your turn has passed; it is now mine. Prepare to die, sir!"

"Spare me!" implored the other.

"Never! You sought this battle and have failed."

"Mercy! Give me an even chance for my life!"

"You have had it. Prepare for death!"

A groan pealed from the big man's lips, for he saw the deadly weapon pointed straight at his heart.

Just then the whistling sound of the helices caught their ears, and the big man glanced up with a violent start, beheld the airship and uttered a wild exclamation.

His eyes bulged, his lips parted and he shuddered.

"A visitation from the demon!" he shrieked.

Alarmed, the other man glanced around at the whirling boat and was as much startled to see it as his enemy was.

But he was thrown off his guard for an instant and the tigerish glance of the big man observed it at once.

With a spring he pounced upon his victim again and knocked the pistol from his hand.

But the younger man swung him around and fixing a desperate clutch upon him he gave him a fling.

With a crash he struck the ropes and burst through.

Out of the basket he fell, uttering a shriek.

He flung out his hand and caught hold of the edge of the basket.

There he hung for a few moments, moaning in heartrending tones, but he was weak from his wound and all the vitality fled from the remaining hand.

He let go.

Down through the air he shot, like a thunderbolt.

A shiver of horror swept over the spectators, for by this time the cutter was close to the balloon.

Down he fell, and his body struck the waters of the gulf and disappeared forever beneath the waves.

He was dead ere he reached the water.

As soon as the balloon was relieved of his weight it mounted higher in the atmosphere, with a bound, and sailed along on a level with the Flying Fish.

Every word of the dialogue had been heard and understood by Jack, who had learned several foreign languages.

"Help! help!" shouted the balloonist, upon seeing human beings on the ship.

"Are you in trouble yet?" cried Jack, in French, as he graduated the cutter's speed to keep even with the silken bag.

"The valve rope is broken within the balloon!" was the reply.

"He can't let out the gas and descend," said Jack.

"Wot's ter be did ter help him?" queried Tim.

"That's the question. I say," added the boy, in French, "cut the bag!"

"It won't do any good—the balloon's afire!" was the despairing reply.

And so it was, as Jack observed a moment afterward.

There was no time to lose if he wished to save the unfortunate fellow, so he lowered the boat a few feet below the car and cried, in French:

"Drop down upon our deck!"

The stranger did so, and the balloon darted up high in the sky when lightened, enveloped in a mass of flames.

Jack saw that the Frenchman was a stylishly dressed young fellow of twenty, with a blond mustache and reddish colored hair.

He was very pale, and bled from innumerable wounds inflicted by his late adversary during their thrilling struggle. The young inventor went out to meet him.

"You are to be congratulated on your escape," said the boy.

"Monsieur, I hope God will bless you for thus rescuing me

from the hand of that fiendish madman," replied the stranger, deeply agitated.

"You and he were foes?"

"The bitterest."

"How came he to inveigle you up in the balloon?"

"Oh, he is a professional aeronaut, and made the ascent from Marseilles, where we both come from. We had a standing challenge to fight a duel, and, to avoid the authorities' interference, I agreed to go up in the balloon to settle our difficulty when he made his public ascension this morning."

"Ah! it was a prearranged matter?"

"It was; but, unfortunately, before we were fifty feet from the earth my enemy became a raving maniac, and, suddenly attacking me before I could defend myself, we became engaged in a fierce fight. In my desperation I jerked the valve rope to let out gas so we could descend, when it snapped in two within the globe and left me a helpless victim in his hands. Had you not arrived at the moment you interfered, I would most certainly have been a mangled corpse."

"You wish to descend again, I presume?"

"Such is my most anxious wish, monsieur."

"You shall do so, but it will be far from your home."

"That does not signify to me, as I have plenty money to travel back."

"Very well. Tim, lower the cutter to the earth."

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered Topstay, slackening the revolutions of the helices.

The stranger cast a look of curiosity around and then asked:

"Isn't this an aerostac of some kind, monsieur?"

"It is a flying ship of my own invention."

"Marvelous! It does not seem possible it could be invented."

Jack shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"Greater wonders than this boat exist," he replied.

The young Frenchman was exhausted and unstrung by the fearful ordeal he passed through, and looked as if he would faint.

Jack brought him inside and braced him up with a glass of liquor.

His amazement increased when he beheld the interior arrangement of the airship, and he expressed his open admiration of its mechanism in glowing terms, and thanked Jack, again and again.

He then tendered the boy his card and begged him to call upon him at any time, when everything would be done to make it as pleasant as possible for him and his friends.

The card bore the name of Pierre Fontaine, Marquis of Herault.

By this time the cutter reached the earth, and Tim turned a lever which shot out four flanges, concealed in the hull of the boat, upon which the Flying Fish landed with a gentle shock.

They were in an open field near a big lake and not many miles from the sea coast, in a district unknown to any of them.

It was, in fact, in the department of Nice, near Theiners, and here Pierre Fontaine took leave of Jack and his friends, and a passing countryman directed him on his way.

The cutter mounted into the air as soon as he was gone, and at a height of fifteen hundred feet shot out over the sea again and headed for the island of Corsica, over which she fled toward Sicily, and thence she made a bee-line for Arabia.

Twelve hundred miles were made in one day from the time they passed the Italian island, and Mount Sinai arose before their view on the borders of the headwaters of the Red Sea.

Jack's course was now along the 30th parallel.

With the Dead Sea and the ruins of Babylon on the left, the cutter shot off for the Persian Gulf, the declining sun beautifying the scene with its golden rays.

Fritz was at the wheel, and Jack stood out on deck viewing

the rolling landscape of hill and dale below, with a powerful mass.

He saw a horseman flying across the plain toward a ruin, a male in the saddle before him and a troop of wild, mounted Arabs in pursuit.

Away the man dashed at breakneck speed, but the gayly decked and howling horde in pursuit rapidly gained on him, firing shot after shot from their long guns at the desperate fugitive.

"It's a white man!" exclaimed the boy after a keen scrutiny. "And it's a white girl he is trying to save. Heaven help him! Fritz!"

"Vot iss?" demanded the Dutch boy, who witnessed the thrilling scene.

"Drive the boat to the ground, and, by heavens, we will have those people!" cried the boy, in ringing tones of determination.

CHAPTER XII.

OUTWITTING THE BEDOUINS.

It was over the plateau of Nedjid the band of nomads were sweeping like an avalanche after the horseman and the woman, from which location Jack at once concluded they were Bedouins.

The deserts of Arabia, and especially this plateau, is their natural place of abode of these independent, lawless thieves. Moreover, he saw that they were all armed with lances and guns, wore haikhs—long, wide garments fastened on their heads and descending to their feet, and burnouses, or ge mantles.

Well-made men, lean, sinewy and active, with brown skin, and violent passions, they were shouting and yelling as they went thundering over the plain in pursuit of their prey, so intent upon their work that they did not notice the airship sailing down on them from above.

Every shot they fired was plainly heard by Jack and his friends, as sounds rise to a great distance.

Fritz managed the boat most admirably, for she descended without causing her inmates any uneasy feeling, and went sweeping along behind the Bedouins like a great bird.

Down, down, down she shot, when Jack grasped a long line and made a slipnoose in the end of it.

Bang! went a shot.

It was fatal.

The fugitive's horse fell.

He looked like an English cavalry soldier.

Out from the saddle he fell, with the girl clutched in his arms, but alighting upon his feet he started to run.

Bang! came another shot.

A cry pealed from the brave fellow's lips.

Struck in the back the shot had pierced his heart.

He dropped the girl, flung up his arms and fell dead.

With wildest yells, and the thunder of hoofs, the wild horde came dashing on at breakneck speed, bearing straight upon the terrified girl.

She was less than twenty, and wore a blue dress, a sailor's, and had a remarkably pretty face.

Her starting eyes were fastened in horror upon the wild hordes of the desert, her clasped hands pressed to her bosom, her lips parted to give utterance to a shriek.

They were almost trampling her down now.

Jack's heart sank.

He saw they would reach her before he could.

With a despairing effort he swung the lasso around his head and let the unfolding coils fly with a scream.

The noose fell over the girl's shoulders and he jerked it tight.

"Up!" he shrieked. "Quick!"

Obediently Fritz sent the cutter flying skyward.

Jack hauled in the rope.

The girl was jerked up in the air over the astonished Bedouins' heads toward the boat, and they swept by under her.

There she swung like a clock pendulum, and a shriek of terror pealed from her lips at finding herself in such a strange position.

Then the Arabs reined in their fiery steeds, glanced up, saw the cutter, and recoiled with yells of the most intense dismay.

Mohammedans, these descendants of Ishmael were superstitious.

In the boat they saw a strange spirit descending from the heavens to punish them; but the Marabout in their company, fearing he might lose prestige, yelled that it was nothing but a bird come to rescue the girl, and implored them to fire at her.

Having true belief in their priest's words, they leveled a score of gleaming spears at the girl's pendant body and let drive.

The boat was ascending, and sweeping away faster than the flying weapons came, however, and they fell short of their mark.

Besides, Jack was hauling the line in rapidly, hand over hand, and bringing the girl up to the deck out of danger.

Within a moment he had her up to the rail.

"Courage!" he cried, cheerfully.

"Human beings!" she gasped, in amazement.

Bang! bang! came a volley of gunshots, but by this time Jack had helped the girl safely to the deck, and the bullets rattled harmlessly against the metal shell of the boat and rebounded again.

"Are you hurt?" queried Jack.

"I haven't even the likes of a scratch!" she replied.

"You are lucky," said Jack, inferring that she was Irish.

"I am that. But where am I entirely?"

"Safe on a flying ship."

"Sure, that's a mighty queer kind of a ship, isn't it?"

"Rather. Who was killed?"

"As brave a lad as ever left England. He was escorting me from Koucet to El Katif, where I'm after living with my father, who is in the coffee business there, when along came those Bedouins, shoots me horse from under me and gives us pursuit. I'm sorry he's dead."

Just then Tim came out with several hand grenades.

"Beg parding, sir, but kin I sock 'em with these?" he asked, saluting.

"Drop a dozen among the beggars!" said Jack.

He saw that the girl was very nervous over her adventure, and asking her inside he set about to revive her courage.

Tim stumped over to the railing, spit on his hand and let a bomb fly in the midst of the nomads below.

It burst with a loud report, and knocked several over.

"Trim in yer main sheets thar, goldurn yer buttons!" the old sailor roared. "Look out fer yer upper rigin'—thar's a howlin' cyclone up here, an' I'm a-goin' ter carry away yer sails fore an' aft, I am! Thar's another fur ye!"

Down went a second grenade.

A fearful report followed, scattering death and destruction in its path, and the now terrified Arabs scattered like chaff before the wind.

Bang! bang! bang! thundered three more of the bombs.

With every explosion one or more of the Bedouins fell.

Tim was delighted at the havoc he created.

He had well avenged the ruthless murder of the poor soldier, and he did not pause in his fusillade until all the bombs were used up.

By that time the cutter had ascended high in the air again, and Jack ordered Fritz to steer for the distant town of El Katif, where the Irish girl lived, just faintly to be seen in the distance.

Within a short time the boat arrived above it and was lowered in the principal square to the ground.

Its arrival was witnessed by all the inhabitants, and the natives became filled with superstitious fear.

Some fell flat on their faces, bowing their heads to the ground, others raised a great outcry, and fled in all directions, a portion hastily hid themselves and began to pray, while the more venturesome came rushing toward the boat on all sides to find out what it was.

A scene of the most intense excitement ran through the strange old town, and a fearful uproar resounded.

Jack led the girl to an accommodation ladder, and helping her to alight to the ground she thanked him in the warmest terms.

"I shall be after never forgetting your kindness," she said, gratefully, as she shook hands with him. "You have saved my life, sir."

"My reward lies in having been successful in doing so," gallantly replied the boy, doffing his hat to her politely.

"Poor Ned Howard! I'll tell his commanding officer at the garrison how he died to save me, God rest his soul! It's sorry I am that I had to go to Koucet for me father on business. Yet I've often done it before without trouble. I knew Ned, and met him there just ready to return here, and gladly availed meself of his offer of escort. But see how fatally it ended for him. Then you won't call on my father?"

"I have no time. I must wish you good-by now. See what a crowd is rushing this way. I must escape them."

He returned to the boat and ordered Fritz to start the boat, when up she soared into the air before the gaze of the amazed Arabians, who paused, wonder-struck, to view her.

Higher and higher the boat arose to the sky, and soon it looked like a mere speck to the amazed people thronging the street.

Jack watched the town until it faded from view, and seeing that the boat kept steadily ascending, he walked over into the pilot-house and saw that Fritz wore a scared look.

"What are you raising her so high for?" he asked.

Glancing at the barometer he saw that the humidity was increasing rapidly, while the height gauge registered a thousand feet.

It was rapidly getting very cold, too.

"I couldn'd vhas helb id!" stammered Fritz, turning red in the face.

"You can't help it? That's queer," said Jack, in surprise.

"Och! don'd yer see vot vhas habbened?"

"No."

"I turned dot lever dere——"

"Well?"

"Und dot handle vhas proke off short!"

"Great heavens!"

The lever handle in question was the one regulating the speed of the helices, and it was snapped in two so close to the switch-board that it was impossible to stop the continued ascent of the boat without making a new lever and removing the broken part.

This would occupy considerable time.

Meanwhile the boat would continue to rapidly ascend into the heavenly realms and probably keep on until they got up into a region so rare that they could not live to breathe it.

Jack realized their danger at once.

"Unless I can repair this damage we are doomed!" he exclaimed, his face turning as pale as death.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HIGHEST ASCENT EVER MADE.

Jack pressed a button and a large gong began to rap and loudly reverberate throughout the cutter.

Tim and the professor hurried into the pilot-house.

"What's the matter?" hastily asked Hopkins, in alarm tones.

"We are shooting up into the air a hundred feet a minute."

"What!" gasped Hopkins.

"Look at that gauge and see for yourself," replied Jack.

"True! true!"

The boy then explained what the accident was that occurred.

"I have got to make a new lever!" he exclaimed, in ending his story. "Stay here to help me."

"Very well."

The boy opened a tool-box, and withdrawing some implements he rapidly set to work upon the switch-board.

"What are the registers?" queried Jack, as he worked.

"The temperature of the air is 59 degrees, and the dew-point 48," the professor replied, glancing up at the glass case.

"What time is it?"

"Six o'clock."

"Our height?"

"Seven thousand feet."

"Tim!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Close all the doors and windows."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Fritz!"

"Yah."

"Start the electric heaters."

"Yah," said Fritz, obeying by turning a lever.

Jack got the broken piece of lever out, and the chill which was stealing over the interior of the boat began to diminish as a congenial heat stole through the boat from the radiator.

The boy then began to make a new lever, and after a short interval asked:

"What is our height now, Hopkins?"

"Sixteen thousand feet," replied the professor, studying the gauges.

"The temperature?"

"It has fallen to 32 and the dew-point to 26."

"How long is the interval?"

"Ten minutes."

The boy worked away like a steam engine, and the boat shot up into a bank of clouds measuring 1,200 feet in thickness, and moved and spirated so fast that they could scarcely see the kind they were.

The upper surface of the clouds was not uniformly like the under sides seen from below, but were of a conical or pyramidal shape, and the imposing masses seemed to precipitate themselves upon the earth as if to engulf it.

A buzzing began in the aeronauts' ears, and kept increasing, and they experienced a pain such as is felt by sudden plunging the head into ice cold water.

Their chests seemed dilated, and failed in elasticity; their pulses quickened, the veins stood out, strongly marked their hands, and the blood ran to their heads, making them feel as if their hats were too tight.

The thermometer continued to descend, and as they moved higher their illness increased, and a drowsy feeling began to assail them.

"There is no electricity coming from the conductors or electrometer," said the professor. "The galvanic flame is more active, and the voltaic pile of sixty couples of steel and zinc gives only five-sixths of a degree on the indicator."

Jack glanced out the window upon which hoar frost began gather in fanciful figures, and saw that the air below was pure that everything could readily be seen, although much diminished by the distance they were from the earth. The towns faded from sight, and the Persian Gulf looked like a ribbon.

The boy resumed his work harder than ever, then asked: "What is our height now?"

"Five miles. Air temperature is 8 and dew-point minus degrees."

"Twenty-six thousand feet!" muttered the boy. "Outside we could hardly see the fine column of mercury in the tube the fine divisions of the scale."

"I notice," remarked the professor, "that the temperature the air does not decrease uniformly with the increase of height. In fact, the decrease in the first mile is double that of the second and four times as great as that of the third mile. Above the lower clouds an extraordinary dryness prevails up here."

"Have you noticed any sounds?"

"We passed a storm cloud, and at 22,000 feet above it I heard thunderclap."

Jack lapsed into silence again, his file rasping away, and he rapidly completed the lever and began to adjust it.

"Twenty-nine thousand feet! The height of Mount Everest, where the diamond mine lies," said the professor, suddenly reading the indicator.

Despite the electric heat an uncomfortable chill filled the boat, for they were at a region of intense rarity—nearly six miles high—a region of intense stillness to which no sound penetrated.

"Tim!" exclaimed the boy, "bring out our furs."

"Ay, ay, sir! I've got 'em. Here yer are."

Jack put on a heavy sealskin, thickly lined ulster.

"That's better," said he as his friends followed his example, for they were getting stiff and numb with the cold.

"Makes me think o' when I wuz searchin' fer ther North pole on ther Berry expedition," said Tim, with chattering teeth. "We got pinched by ther ice, an' sot out wi' dog sledges. All o' my messmates dropped, frozen, by ther way. I pushed on, however, an' reached it."

"The North Pole?" queried the professor.

"Ay, sir; an' wot's more, I climbed up it an' nailed ther tars an' Stripes at ther top, started back, thawed out my messmates on a bonfire, an', would yer b'lieve it——"

"No, sir, I wouldn't!" emphatically said the professor, who divined at last that Tim was lying like fury.

"Then I won't tell you the rest!" growled the old sailor.

At this moment Jack, having completed the new lever, put on and found that it fitted perfectly.

He reversed it and glancing at the gauge saw that it now marked a height of 50,000 feet from the earth.

It was the highest ascent ever made by human beings.

The helices kept warm by their own friction, else the bitter cold might have cracked them like pipe-stems.

As soon as the boy slackened speed the Flying Fish began to descend, when Jack saw one end of the boat suddenly sag at the bow.

He gave a start of alarm, glanced around and observed that one of the big helices up forward had stopped revolving.

The boat began to drop heavily off at an angle, then.

A second glance explained the trouble.

The electric wire had got caught in one of the levers and broke.

Unless it was repaired the boat was apt to shoot off downward at an acute angle, to their danger, and get them in trouble below.

"I'll go out and fix it," said the boy, putting on a fur cap and rubber gloves. "Here, Fritz, mind the wheel."

He opened the door and passed out into the raw cold, through which the sun was shining down like an electric light.

The entire boat was covered with ice and frost.

Despite the heavy clothing he wore, Jack felt a terrible chill pass over him, and he hurriedly procured a ladder, dragged it over the slanting deck to the helix post, and ascended.

To repair the wire required time.

A fearful sleepy feeling attacked the boy at once, but he bravely fought it off and went on with his work.

The broken wire was joined again, and Jack descended to the deck, the helix revolving and the boat straightening.

She was going down two thousand feet a minute now.

Jack then attempted to walk to the pilot-house, but his legs refused to move—they were stricken powerless.

He then tried to move his arms, but they, too, were helpless.

Then he shook his body, but seemed to have no legs or arms, and his head fell over upon his right shoulder and he sank to the deck.

He seemed to have power in the back of his neck and the muscles in his back, but none in his limbs whatever.

Then an intense black mist arose before him.

The optic nerve had suddenly lost its strength, blinding him, yet all this time, despite the loss of power, his brain was clear and active.

Jack had a feeling as if death were stealing upon him, but he could not speak any more than he could move, and he had a fearful longing to go to sleep.

A serene, placid look spread over his face, without the least earnestness or anxiety, and he began to doze into unconsciousness.

It all happened so quickly his friends did not suspect what a fearful lethargy was stealing over him, nor did they see that he had involuntarily fallen down.

When they did observe him he was choking.

His breath was coming and going in long, painful gasps and groans, and he lay stretched out on his back with closed eyes, spread fingers, and one of his legs drawn up.

It was a fatal stupor that overcame him.

If it lasted it was sure to end in death.

His friends saw him, and Tim gave a cry of alarm, and came hobbling out into the bleak air to his side.

He knelt there and peered into Jack's face, which was turning black.

A terrible cry pealed from the old sailor's pale lips as he recoiled from Jack's side, and he yelled frantically:

"Oh, my God! He is dead!"

And lifting the boy up in his arms he carried him in out of the cold.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEVIL WORSHIPPERS.

It was only the deadly exposure and fatal coma of the rare air and intense cold that overpowered Jack, and he came to his senses when the cutter got down in the lower atmosphere again.

His friends were bathing his body in brandy, and he was none the worse for his adventure when they neared the ground.

The first question he asked when he revived was:

"How high up did we go?"

"Fifty thousand one hundred and sixty feet—about nine and a half miles," answered Hopkins.

"Wonderful!" muttered the boy. "It's the greatest altitude ever made."

"One-sixth of the thickness of the atmospheric envelope which surrounds the earth," said the professor. "The centre of gravitation is sixty miles deep. Beyond that there is no air—only empty space—a blank, dark, cold void, in which the heavenly bodies float in infinite space.

The darkness of night was settling down.

They were soaring eight hundred feet from the ground as the altimeter indicated, and below them were the lights of Kedje in Beloochistan, lying between Persia and Hindostan, off to the right darkly gleamed the broad expanse of Afghanistan.

They were yet fifteen hundred miles from Mount Everest, but had crossed over the Bushkerd range, now far astern of them.

By midnight three hundred more miles were covered and they went over the highest peaks of the mountains of the Indus, the great river of the same name on the border line, winding like a great serpent below them, showing that they were at last soaring above India in the vicinity of Shikarpoor.

When daylight came they were passing over the great sandy desert of Ajmeer, 500 miles in extent, a dry, alluvial spot upon which the sun darted its burning rays scorchingly.

A small oasis appeared, rich in vegetation compared to the dried-up look of the surrounding country, and Jack lowered the boat toward it.

"Our water supply is running short," he remarked, "and I have heard that fairly good fluid comes from the springs gushing up in these oases. We can replenish our casks here."

"Ay, now, an' thar's a Hindoo caravan thar ahead o' us," said Tim, pointing down at several elephants and men who were gathered in a group among the green vegetation as if to rest from the hot rays of the sun after a weary journey.

"Dey must been used ter seein' dem kinds of airships like dis vun," said Fritz, "'cause dey don't vhas been afraid or mofe deirself alretty."

The boat alighted on the dried-up grass that covered a large tract of the plains, a short distance from the oasis, and came to a pause with a slight shock.

None of the men who were lying about the oasis moved, but the elephants arose and stood looking at the boat in trembling fear.

Jack and Fritz armed themselves, and descending from the boat made their way into the oasis and up to the men.

"Why—look at the gaunt, famished look on their faces—the poor wretches appear to be half dead," said the boy, pityingly.

"Vat dey vhas—Arabians?"

"No—they look like Rajputs, and are Mussulmen, or Parsee merchants."

One of the natives raised a faint cry, and said in his native tongue:

"Water! Water! Allah, il Allah! We are dying of thirst!"

Jack understood him, and gave a violent start.

"Is there none here?" he asked in the same language.

"None. The well is dry. We arrived here nearly dead. Now we will die, for it is several days since we have had a drop to drink."

"Vot iss dot he dolt yer?" queried Fritz, who did not understand it.

"The case is serious. They are perishing of thirst."

"Vhy dey don't cut open dem elephants, und trink de vater in deir bellies?"

"They are evidently too weak to arise. Fetch them some water from the boat and in the meantime I will question them, Fritz."

The Dutch boy hastened away and Jack soon learned that the unfortunates were journeying from Ramgurdh to Buhawal-

pore, became lost on the desert, and had only just found oasis, when the discovery was made that it was dried up.

Fritz returned with a can of water presently, and gave some to them, he instilled new life in their veins.

It was the last drop of water they had, but Jack felt confident that he could produce all they wanted.

"We will bombard the sky and make it rain," said Fritz. "We have got to have water ourselves. Go back to the boat and get the others to bring out the balloons, rock mortars and kites. I'll startle and relieve these men."

Fritz had no sooner gone when one of the Hindoos uttered a cry.

"Fly! Fly for your lives!" he shrieked, wildly.

"What is the matter?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"Look yonder to the eastward."

"I only see a cloud of dust. What is it—a sandstorm?"

"No; worse! It is a band of devil worshippers!"

"The deuce! What are they?"

"Can't you see the horsemen now?"

"Yes."

"They are Khonds!"

Jack gave a nervous start upon hearing this dread name, for he knew that this tribe had preserved completely primitive religion of Hindostan.

Forced into the jungles, mountains and deserts by the victorious advance of the Aryan race from the northwest, they have preserved, in their almost inaccessible retreats the religion that prevailed in the peninsula before Brahminism was heard of.

The Khonds sacrifice only to malignant deities such as Siva the Destroyer, the goddess Kali, and the God of Earth whom they seek to propitiate by human sacrifice, principally children, who, however, were not taken from their race, but were kidnapped from neighboring tribes.

"How do you know they are Khonds?" asked Jack.

"They attacked us, but we escaped them yesterday."

"Of course they now see us here?"

"They have the eyes of hawks."

"And will murder you?"

"As surely as the sun rises."

"Then come aboard of my boat of the air and I will save you."

"Is it safe?"

"Have no fear. It is mortal, made by my own hands."

Thus reassured, the men consented to go, and driving the elephants over beside the boat they got aboard.

There were a dozen of them, all men of high caste, regular features, long heads, brunette skin, oval faces, and hair dark and admirably proportioned bodies.

They were peaceful, inoffensive men, entirely unlike Khonds, who were wont to live by plunder, bursting out of the jungles upon their victims like tigers, and committing most frightful excesses.

The desert robbers were mounted on beautiful steeds, came trooping along like an avalanche, fifty strong, their bright weapons glittering in the sunlight, their banners flying in the breeze, and the gay comparisons of their mode of life gaudy in the extreme.

The frightened Parsees, as the refugees turned out to be, were stowed away inside, and Jack hastily called out to his friends, when they all put on suits of mail made of aluminum as light as cardboard and stronger than steel, which saved them from injury and lent them the appearance of ancient knights.

Arming themselves with weapons of Jack's own invention that fired explosive shells by pneumatic pressure, with ten times the force of gunpowder, they arranged themselves on the deck and awaited a near approach of the devil worshippers.

Probably surprised at the looks of the air cutter, the Khonds

came rushing helter-skelter and fired a volley with their long Arabian muskets and long-barreled pistols.

The shots struck our friends and hit the boat, but did not do the least damage to anyone or anything.

Then Jack and his friends opened fire upon them with their repeaters, and each one fired twenty rounds before he stopped.

With the explosions of the shells in their midst, and seeing the fearful havoc it created, the robbers fled like the wind, leaving half their horses and men lying dead on the desert.

They raced away against the strong wind that was blowing, and soon were hardly to be seen in the far distance.

"Now get to work," said Jack. "Let us get the rain falling and fill our water casks ere they return, boys."

They laid aside their weapons and got the implements out.

The mortar was planted, and Fritz began firing explosive bombs up in the sky, the professor sent up the huge rockets, Jack inflated several hot-air balloons, to which bombs were attached that burst at a certain altitude, and Tim helped where he was needed.

An hour of continued firing followed, but no rain came.

It looked as if the experiment was a failure, and they stopped.

The Parsees looked on in wondering amazement from the deck, and the apparently useless implements were returned to the boat.

A black cloud suddenly arose from earth to sky away to the windward.

"The desert grass is afire!" exclaimed Jack, aghast.

"It must have been the work of those Khonds!" cried the professor.

"Send ther boat aloft! Send her aloft, lad!" yelled Tim.

Jack darted into the pilot-house to do so, for the wind was blowing the great fire directly toward them at fearful velocity.

He turned the lever to raise the boat, but the Flying Fish did not move.

The batteries had been exhausted from constant use and needed recharging.

On rushed the fire toward them with a fearful roar that momentarily grew louder.

CHAPTER XV.

FLOATING UNDER STRANGE POWER.

A cry of despair pealed from Jack's lips, for by glancing up at the gauge he saw that the battery supply was at zero.

"Och, Gott!" groaned Fritz. "Vhe vhas been roasted ter det'!"

"Look at those Hindoos! Stop them! They're jumping overboard!" cried Jack.

Frightened as they were, the poor wretches were all springing to the ground upon seeing the fire, for they feared it was going to envelope them, and cause them to die.

One after the other they sprang to the ground, despite the boy's cries to arrest them, until they were all gone.

Nearer and still nearer came the fire.

Great clouds of smoke and immense tongues of flame were sucking up to the sky from the ignited desert grass, while the wind caught thousands of sparks and wafted them along above the fierce conflagration in showers.

"What shall we do, Jack?" wailed the terrified Hopkins. "Must we remain here to passively be devoured by that raging furnace?"

"No!" promptly replied the boy. "We can save ourselves, but if we wish to do so we must let those poor wretches, the Parsees, sacrifice themselves in the fiery element which their forefathers, the fugitives of Persia, once worshiped."

"Fer ther Lord's sake, how is we ter do it?" groaned Tim, as he felt a hot wave of air from the fire come rushing upon them.

"You forget the vacuum!" cried the boy.

A thrill of joy passed over them.

There was no time to replenish the batteries.

So Jack set the force pump working, and the air was sucked out of the hold of the Flying Fish in great blasts.

Faster and faster worked the pump.

Then the airship began to draw upward and bump on the ground; then she suddenly arose.

Up, up it went, as lightly as a feather, when a dark shadow fell across the deck, and Jack glanced upward.

Something spattered down upon his face through the open window.

The boat was then fifty feet from the earth approaching a dark cloud.

"Rain!" he shouted.

Everyone was electrified, and glanced down.

The poor Hindoos, mounted on their elephants, were hastening away from the roaring flames as fast as they could go, yelling with fear, and praying for salvation.

Momentarily the rain increased, and in a few moments it was pouring down in torrents.

"Thank God!" gasped Hopkins. "Our apparatus worked, after all."

"Und see! It vhas puttin' oudt dot fire!" cried Fritz excitedly.

He pointed off to the windward, where only half a mile away the great fire was being beaten down, and tremendous clouds of dense black smoke arose as it was subdued.

"Hurroar!" chuckled Tim. "It takes us ter control ther elements."

He gave a hitch at his pants, took a chew of plug, and squirted some of the juice in Bismarck's eye, whereupon Fritz danced up to him wrathily, pulled his nose, and a scrap began, which might have ended seriously had not Jack shouted:

"Fritz, go back in the battery room and recharge the jars."

There was nothing for it but to obey, as there was no time for play, and the young Dutchman went reluctantly, hurling a challenge back at Tim to meet him in a duel with clubs in an hour.

Jack stopped the pump.

The boat remained stationary at sixty feet height, but the wind kept drifting it, a most enormous suction contracting the outer shell against the massive skeleton.

Harder beat the rain down, lower went the fire, and the grass ahead of the flames being dampened, failed to ignite, and the onward progress of it was suddenly checked.

In five minutes more the fire was entirely extinguished.

Everyone was delighted.

They saw the Parsees come to a pause and spread their blankets to catch the rain when they saw the fire put out, and the water that beat down on the roofs of the deck houses trickled with a merry tinkle down the leaders, filling the water casks.

A scene of general rejoicing followed among the air navigators and the poor wretches down on the desert.

You have saved their lives, dear boy," said the relieved professor, "and you have saved us a great inconvenience. Jack Wright, you are, I may say, a wonder of the Nineteenth Century, by Jove!"

"Now you can see the efficacy of my vacuum theory."

"Aye; and, if need have been, it could have saved our lives."

They heard the pounding of the engine and dynamo generating electricity, and pretty soon Fritz shouted through the tube:

"Dot vhas all righd. Make der vheels goin' alretty. She

vh as go oop by der sky so soon as you bleases vunct, und I soon haf enough electricity made to last fife days more, py Shiminey!"

Jack turned the lever, and the helices revolved.

He then let a tiny stream of air penetrate the hold by means of the second pump, and gradually let it fill up again, so that the boat would not suddenly drop from a sudden expansion of great volume.

Presently the vacuum was filled.

The aeroplane now depended upon her helices.

Their whizz and buzz was music to the ears of the navigators, and the boat mounted up into the higher stratas of air again.

Jack then started the stern screw, and like an arrow from a bow the cutter went speeding along on her course again through the rainstorm Jack had made as correctly as if nothing had happened to mar their trip.

They had plenty water on board by the time they passed from the storm, and glancing down saw a large tract of land wet by the rain; further on were several miles of blackened sand, over which the devastating fire had gone sweeping.

The cutter finally passed over Rajpootana, and following the course of the headwaters of the Ganges River, she left Delhi and Oude astern, going up into the presidency of Nepaul along the Himalaya Valley.

On the following day she was hovering over the Gunduck River at a height of only one hundred feet, the sky clear above and a dense forest below her, when Jack went out on the after deck and peered down at the wild landscape below.

The woods were made up of betel palms, banyan fig trees, teaks, sandal-wood, edible pines, oak, maples and hazels.

Guvas, pineapples, mangoes, pomegranates, plantains and loquots were growing wild everywhere, while monkeys, peacocks, jungle-fowl, parrots, ibis, flamingoes, tailor-birds, bulbuls, pelicans and pagoda thrush abounded in the trees.

Formidable tigers and leopards were seen prowling among the underbrush; deer and antelopes bounded over the clearings; wolves, panthers, jackals, bears, hyenas, lynxes and bison were seen by the score, and sand snakes, cobra manillas and black-hooded snakes skulked among the branches.

Down in the river there floated like logs monstrous crocodiles, while swarms of mosquitoes, locusts, wasps and flying bugs made up a concert of sounds only outrivalled in more tropical climates.

The boy saw that the place offered the most magnificent chances for a hunt, and he resolved to take advantage of it, as their supply of fresh meat had given out.

The professor was steering the boat, and walking forward to the pilot-house the boy asked him:

"Would you like to descend to the ground for a hunt?"

"My dear boy, nothing would afford me greater pleasure."

"Then lower the Flying Fish beside the river into the very first clearing you see, and we will enjoy a few hours' sport before dinner," said Jack, going inside to get their weapons ready from the storeroom.

Tim and Fritz were busy cleaning the rooms when Jack hailed them and told them what they were going to do.

They were delighted at the prospect, and when the boat landed in a big clearing near the river they were all ready.

Tim opened the door to lead the way out, when up came Whiskers to view the proceedings, and Fritz twisted his tail.

With a dismal howl the monkey flew out the open door, leaped across the deck and sprang to the ground.

"Hey! Haul to, thar!" yelled Tim, startled at the fear of losing his pet in the woods. "Dash yer blinky eyes, whar are yer a-goin'?"

He hopped over to the ladder in pursuit of the monkey, and Whiskers, delighted over making his escape, scampered away.

Down to the ground hurried Tim after him, and off hopped the little rascal into the woods, with the old sailor in hot pursuit.

Fritz softly chuckled and winked to himself, and followed Jack and the professor down to the ground.

By that time Tim and his monkey had disappeared.

It was decided that they separate, and accordingly the three started off in opposite directions to beat about in quest of game.

Jack took the course away from the sluggish river, and went on among the tangled vines, fallen tree trunks and dense shrubbery, with his rifle over his shoulder and his eyes alert.

He saw plenty small game, and heard his distant friend firing, but kept on looking for something worth shooting.

It soon came in the form of a fine deer which bounded across his path, and like a flash his rifle was to his shoulder, and he fired.

With a bound high into the air, the deer fell with a crash into some bushes, and the boy rushed forward to gain his prize.

He had no sooner reached the carcass, however, when there came a blood-curdling yell from the bushes, and the next moment a huge body sprang through the air, landed on top of the deer and confronted him.

It was an immense tiger!

CHAPTER XVI.

A TIGER HUNT.

A chill of horror swept over Jack upon beholding the monster that contested his claim to the deer.

Its baleful eyes snapped with fire, its fur bristled with rage and its tail lashed its flanks, while from the gaping red mouth there emanated from between the formidable row of gleaming white teeth the most horrible snarls.

The tiger was a monster in size.

Only a few yards separated it from the boy.

It evidently had been in pursuit of the deer when Jack shot the creature, and upon beholding Jack had been put to a most ferocious rage.

The boy shuddered and drew back a step.

He was not looking for such game as this.

In fact, he would have retreated could he have done without danger, for he knew from the accounts of travelers that it was hard to kill these beasts.

In no wise intimidated, however, he raised his rifle to his shoulder, took aim and fired.

This movement of his weapon caused the tiger to spring.

It came just as Jack fired, and its lithe body mounting into the air caused the ball to pass under it and expend its force harmlessly in a tree.

Before Jack could fire again the tiger struck him.

The shock was as great as if he was hit by a thunderbolt for he was knocked flying upon his back, the rifle fell from his hand, and he was partially stunned.

As soon as he realized his position he found the beast with its massive front paws planted upon his chest and its terrible face just above his own.

The position filled Jack with alarm.

Upon the slightest provocation he saw that the huge beast would come down, the gaping mouth would close upon him and he would be torn to pieces.

Heaven help me!" he muttered.

A growl like thunder escaped the tiger.

There was a pistol in Jack's belt, and he knew that if he could but reach it he might save himself.

He had scarcely moved his arm, though, when with a snarl

tiger lowered its head further, stamped its paw on his shoulder and glared like a demon at his hand. The boy's alarm increased. He saw that he could hardly make the most imperceptible movement which the creature would fail to detect. How the boy wished that one of his friends was there to help him. How his heart palpitated, and how hard it seemed to him to catch his breath. Death seemed absolutely certain. He was strung up to desperation. Again he essayed to reach the pistol with his other hand. This movement distracted the tiger's attention from the first one, and as it turned its head, by a quick, soft movement, he got his pistol out in his right hand. Another angry yell pealed from the monster, and it buried its fangs in his sleeve, lacerating his flesh and tore out a piece of the cloth. Had it gone half an inch further he would have been killed. The boy saw that it was going to attack him now, and holding the pistol at its body he fired. A terrible explosion followed as the ball burst inside of the tiger, and with a huge hole torn in its stomach it leaped a few feet in the air. Down it came with a bang a few yards distant, and rolling, quivering and kicking it uttered cry after cry. Up to his feet bounded the boy. "A lucky shot!" he gasped. "Jack! Jack!" yelled Tim's voice just then. "Yes. This way, Tim!" he responded. "Whar are ye, lad?" "In the clearing." "Look out, for ther Lord's sake!" The warning hardly reached the boy when the bushes parted and another tiger, doubtless the wounded one's mate, came flying through, followed by a shot from Tim. Jack did not expect this. He glided behind a tree. From here he aimed his pistol at the beast's head. It stood planted a few feet away, glaring around with its head in the air, snuffing and growling. The creature was not as heavy as the other. "A female!" muttered the boy. Then he fired. A fearful gash was cut in the monster's neck. It spun around and around, bleeding profusely, and Tim at last then made his appearance. He had no sooner set his good eye on the tiger, though, when he dodged out of sight in the bushes. "Kill ther lubber!" he yelled. "That's easier said than done!" replied Jack. He wished he had his rifle. As he had to depend on his pistol, however, he aimed it and fired again. This time he was more successful. The ball struck the beast on the head. There it burst. Its head was blown to pieces. The other tiger now attracted Jack's attention. It was evidently in great agony from the gaping wound Jack had given it, and to put the brute out of its misery they fired another shot, which killed it immediately. "That settles it!" he exclaimed. "It came near a-makin' mess o' me!" growled Tim as he jumped up to Jack. "Yer see, I wuz a-chasin' this 'ere rascal through the woods," he added, holding Whiskers up to the nape of his neck, "when that 'ere pirate o' ther woods leaped down on me, an' liked to ha' taken me fore an' aft, when I clumb a tree an' it shot by."

"You must have heard me firing," said Jack. "Ay, lad, an' I seen ye from ther tree. I couldn't a-done it wi' this 'ere wooden leg if I hadn't a-had that tager arter me. But as soon's I get up thar what should I see but a boy-kinstruckter."

"Boa-constrictor?"

"Aye, aye! That's it. Ther critter had Whiskers harf way down its forrard hatch, wi' only his tail stickin' out an' a-wigglin'. Then I ups an' fixes my eye on it an' grabs Whiskers' tail an' I heaves away right smart, an' out the little bummer pops—"

"Oh, say, Tim!"

"Then," went on the old liar, "I poked my finger down ther boy-constrictor's throat an' yer mayn't b-live wot I ses, but ther devil gagged so hard he turned hisself inside out like a glove finger, an' then I had him."

"Draw it mild, Tim. Grab one end of this deer and we will carry it back to the boat. Come, time presses."

Tim complied with a frown, for he saw that Jack did not believe him, and they carried the game away.

By the time they got back to the Flying Fish they found Fritz and the doctor there, the former loaded down with birds, and the latter smilingly exhibiting a small bear so full of shots that it looked like a sieve.

While Tim was locking Whiskers up they swapped stories, prepared their game for use and stowed it away on board of the boat, when preparations were made for an ascent.

"By five o'clock to-night," said Jack, "I expect we will arrive in sight of our destination, boys, and then to see if Zobeide's story of the fabulous diamond mine is true or not."

"More'n likely it's a lie," said Tim, skeptically.

"If it is, dear boy," said the professor, "I won't mind. We are having such a good time we ought not grumble."

"I tink so neider," added Fritz, lighting his pipe. "But shust der same, if somepody vhas show me dot dere vhas diamonts dere so bick like gobblesstones, I don't vhas kick about tooken 'em."

Jack turned the lever and the helices spun around.

The boat then arose from the woods to an altitude of two hundred feet and sailed away, while Fritz went in the galley to prepare their mid-day meal, Tim continued to clean up the boat and the doctor went to sort out some fossil specimens he had picked up in the woods.

Late in the afternoon Jack descried a distant city.

It lay to the south of the great mountain range, and by a little computation he soon found that it was Khatmandu.

Deodhunga, or Everest Mountain, lay between this city, above Sikim and west of Tassisudon, he knew, and he rang the gong summoning his friends.

"Wot's amiss now?" queried Tim.

"Look there!" said Jack, pointing. "There's Khatmandu!" Eagerly they all peered ahead of the boat, and the boy took down his glass and took a long look ahead.

"Ha! There it is now!" he said, smilingly.

"What?" asked the professor, eagerly.

"The mountain of diamonds?" replied the boy.

They now saw an immense shadowy peak rising to the clouds far ahead.

CHAPTER XVII.

TO THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN.

It was, as Jack calculated, five o'clock in the afternoon when they sighted Mount Deodhunga, and with their hopes high they steered the boat for it.

The shadowy peak was many miles away, but as soon as

they passed Khatmandu they made rapid progress, and rising high in the air saw Sikim below, and Tassisudon far beyond it to the eastward.

In a few hours they arrived at the base of the great peak, which, rising 29,002 feet, certainly was the highest known mountain upon the globe, as Zobeide's parchment said.

The Himalayas are not a single chain of mountains, but a range of rugged, snowy peaks depending from the high table land of Thibet, and separated by deep gorges, the outlets of streams originating in the melted ice and snow of the interior.

On the southern side, where the Flying Fish was, the surface comprised three distinct regions—first, adjoining the plains of Hindostan, the Tarai, a grass-covered, marshy plain; next, the belt of Saul Wood, stretching along a great part of the range, and beyond it the Dhuns, a belt of detritus, extending to the foot of the true mountains.

"We won't see any fall of snow as low as 2,500 feet, dear boy," said the professor, "but at 6,000 feet it snows here regularly every winter. The limit of perennial snow is 16,200 feet in the south, and 17,400 feet on the north side, an anomaly owing to the dry atmosphere of Thibet. There are glaciers in every part of the range above the snow line."

"It will be as bad as Greenland up there," said Jack, pointing up at where the peak of Everest penetrated the clouds, "and we may have a hard time of it to reach it."

"As earthquakes are of frequent occurrence in this central range," said Hopkins, "you may be mistaken on that score."

Upon approaching the mountains close enough, Jack stopped the boat's propeller and increased the speed of the helices, when the cutter began to ascend.

They got out their heaviest garments, for they were going up into the cold region of perpetual snow and wanted to be amply prepared for it.

The boat steadily ascended, and passing over dense woods, yawning ravines, mountain torrents and glassy lakes, it plunged into a mass of clouds hovering about the peaks.

Up, up, up soared the Flying Fish into the vapor, and, bursting through the dense banks she plunged into a cold strata of air, when above them the aeronauts beheld a sea of snow clouding the top of the lofty mountain.

Every one was in a fever of suspense.

They would soon know whether the wonderful diamond mine existed or not, and until the question was solved they were upon the tiptoe of expectation and anxiety.

Night had settled down.

Everything but the dazzling whiteness of the snowy peak assumed a sombre aspect gloomy to behold.

Jack stood at the wheel directing his boat.

He kept a keen glance around and observed a broad, dark streak several miles to the southeast and sent the boat toward it.

Upon a near approach they saw that it was an enormous fissure running from the top of the mountain to the bottom, splitting it in two.

At one side the rocky edge projected out, forming a great ridge, one side of which was banked up with snow, while the other was formed by the gulch.

The depression had a broad stream running through it, and was entirely clear of the snow, for the ridge protected it, keeping the snow back to the eastern side, which was swept around that side of the mountain by the winds.

This great gorge afforded a clear footpath from the bottom to the very apex of the mountain, and was evidently the result of some mighty convulsion of nature in times past.

"Look there," said Jack, pointing down at the gloomy pass and causing the boat to follow it. "If Zobeide's father had traversed that gorge you can see for yourself that he could easily have reached the summit as she said he did."

"I never expected to see anything like this," said Hopkins. "There are unmistakable signs of an earthquake having rent the mountain, which bears out the truth of her story at least in that particular," said the boy. "It begins to me, Mr. Hopkins, as if the woman told the truth."

"Of one thing I am positive, my amiable friend," said the professor. "It is that if the gypsy woman's father really made the ascent he could have done so without much trouble."

The boat followed the gorge continuously now, and as it settled down into it and skimmed along between the precipitous walls, a sudden change of temperature was experienced.

The extreme cold modified.

A glance at the thermometer showed but thirty degrees Fahrenheit, when previously they had seen the mercury at zero.

The further they proceeded along the ravine the warmer it became, and Jack started the searchlight and shot its rays down upon the bed of the gorge.

Bleak, barren rocks lined the bottom, and they saw smoke or steam arising from the river that flowed through it.

As they ascended they saw vegetation cropping out.

It became denser as they proceeded and presently luxuriant. Moreover, the heat kept increasing.

Soon an exclamation burst from Jack's lips.

"The water of that stream is hot!"

"That accounts for the warmth here," said Hopkins, "as I observed the warmth augments the higher up we go. I am forced at last to the conclusion that it flows from springs and not directly from the melted snow."

"Lord save my soul! anybody could live in this 'ere climate," said Tim. "I thought as it'd be so freezin' cold ther we'd be utterd would freeze so hard we could make quoits of 'em."

"Vot is dot up higher vonct?" queried Fritz. "So I don't tink me it vos a lake alretty!"

"So it is!" exclaimed Jack. "And this stream flows from the top."

They were close to the top of the mountain now, and, as they held, on a great plateau, an immense body of water impounded within a great basin, from which a vast cloud of steam was arising.

The water was bubbling with heat, and as the boat approached over it hot air gushed up, driving the mercury up to 70.

Passing across the sheet of water they were suddenly startled to see on the other side of it a great mass of fire. A flame rushed up through a ragged aperture among the rocks, a terrible heat radiating from it in all directions.

To avoid it they were forced to make a wide detour, during which they saw that a large tract of land surrounded it bore no traces of ice or snow.

It was evidently a small volcano in active eruption, which might have been working there for centuries.

A few miles above it was the top of the mountain.

The air was very rare.

Yet it did not, in consequence of the enormous force of the earth's fires, feel as frigid as it evidently was on the other side of the mountain, where the snow laid.

Below them Jack could not see the earth, in consequence of the vast cloud banks that intervened.

He aimed the rays of the searchlight up at the mountain top, and they saw, upon a nearer approach, that it was ragged and broken.

In five minutes more they reached the apex.

A shudder convulsed them at the appalling scene below.

It might once have been a great plateau several miles in extent, but at some remote period the internal fires of the mountain had burst forth into a volcano greater than that of Vesuvius or Hecla, and left behind a yawning gulf.

It was down into this immense crater they looked.

The middle depth was unfathomable.

Imagine, if you can, an aperture as black as ink, that bore

own miles into the mountain, its interior like the inside of a funnel, and you can think what this great crater looked like to Jack Wright.

The boat stood hovering over the awful depth, the moonlight streaming down upon them and they held a consultation. It was decided not to venture into the crater till the next day.

They accordingly landed the boat beside it, and, setting watch, they passed the rest of the night in sleep.

At sunrise next morning, which was very early at that enormous elevation, they arose and partook of breakfast.

The cutter was then put to flight.

Once more they hovered over the crater, and glancing down as the light of day penetrated the yawning gulf, they observed the plateau down below, upon which they could alight if need be around the sides.

Everything was in readiness, and Jack slackened the speed of the helices, when the Flying Fish began to descend.

Down, down, down she went into the black pit, slowly but surely, every one of her crew keenly watching for danger.

Within a few minutes she had descended several hundred feet, and cries of the most intense amazement burst from the lips of our friends at the wonderful scene presented to their view.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOWN IN THE CRATER.

A flock of thousands of birds, startled by the descent of the boat, flew up in great clouds, and rising above the cutter with fierce and startled cries, they fairly shut all the daylight out of the place.

They went pouring out of the volcano, however, leaving many of their eggs and their young behind them in the place. As soon as the fearful roar of their voices and wings died away, our friends glanced down at the shelving interior of the crater.

Everything was as black as ink.

But among the dark earth, stone and rough-looking trees and bushes there flashed up in the rays of the sun thousands of brilliant, gleaming lights from the rough, uncut gems lying scattered about among the debris lining the inside of the crater.

These scintillations only came from those of the precious stones that presented the tiniest, smooth, clean surface, so that must have been the number that did not gleam?

"Diamonds by the thousands!" exclaimed Jack.

"The gypsy queen did not lie after all," said Hopkins.

Tim and Fritz gave utterance to the most extravagant expressions.

It was plain to be seen that there had been enormous deposits of the carbonized crystals within the mountain, which eruption had exposed in this manner.

To get them was an easy matter.

It was doubtful if these precious stones had ever been mined in such an easy manner before by mankind, for there was no searching, digging or blasting to get them—they lay spread out in plain sight and easy reach, to be picked up as easily as the hen's eggs could have been gathered.

Jack brought the boat to a pause upon an extensive plateau, and they all went out on deck.

The ladder was dropped down over the side, and they left the boat and eagerly ran about examining the gems.

They were loosely implanted in various places, from which required no exertion to get them, and they proved to be very large and of the purest white quality, imbedded in quartz stones.

In the crude state they would, of course, require considerable cutting, by which a large amount would be lost.

Within half an hour they all returned to the boat and exhibited their individual finds, whereupon the professor closely examined them.

He was an expert on diamonds, and remarked:

"They are, my Christian friends, specimens of the most exquisite gems I have ever seen in my life, and I predict that if we can get enough of them back to civilization we will amass a tremendous fortune, for the boat can carry millions of dollars' worth of them.

"Let us begin, then," said Jack, "to gather all we can carry. There are several empty kegs in the storeroom in which we can put them, and we will leave here as soon as we can."

Accordingly this programme was carried out.

Having procured the kegs in question, they were placed on the deck, the diamonds they then had were tossed into one of them, and they each slung a hunting bag over their shoulders and set out to gather as many more as they could.

The plateau upon which the boat then rested contained a great many of the diamonds, some of which they could only see by a near approach, and they were all gathered up by mid-day.

Our friends then took a rest, and had their dinner.

As there were no more to be procured there, Jack raised the boat and sent her off across the crater.

As she hovered over the great hole in the center, the boy directed the rays of the searchlight down.

Although it penetrated the distance of a mile, the bottom of the orifice was not to be seen.

They then passed on to the other side, but there found that the sides were sloped down at a very acute angle.

No resting place for the boat was to be seen, and the young inventor then drove the Flying Fish in a circle around the rough wall of the crater in search of some place upon which to rest the cutter.

Not another such plateau or ledge was to be found.

The ground abruptly shelved down at such an angle that it would have been hazardous to have alighted the cutter upon it, although during the trip they saw more of the stones than they would have been able to take away.

"We will have to let a man down at the end of a rope from the boat," said Jack, "while the cutter is held in suspension over the spot where he works."

"Aye, lad, that's no other way," assented Tim. "Who'll do it?"

"You," said Fritz.

"We will pull straws," said the boy.

This was accordingly done, and the choice fell to Jack.

A long, stout line was then made fast to a cradle, and the boat was suspended over an area where they had observed the largest and finest gems, when Jack took a bag with a line attached to it, and was lowered down.

He found the dirt soft and yielding, and discovered that it was easy to keep a foothold and move about.

He then began to fill the bag, and when this was done his friends hoisted it up, emptied it, and let it down again to him.

Jack sent up several loads in this manner, and observing an extraordinary large stone in the midst of an area of very dark ground, he started for it.

He had scarcely taken two steps, however, when the ground suddenly gave way from beneath his feet.

The boy had stepped upon a bed of dust.

There was so much slack to the rope, and such a depth to the dust that the young inventor sank until he was buried.

A cry pealed from his lips that reached the ears of his friends up on the boat, and moving the cutter they saw what had occurred.

Jack was entirely out of their sight.

In they pulled the line, and he was hauled up to the deck, blinded and choking.

Had his friends delayed a few moments he would have perished.

Covered with the sooty dust, they brought him upon the boat again, and found that he was all right when he got the stuff out of his eyes, ears, nose and mouth.

Fritz then went down, and was kept busy till nightfall.

By that time two of the kegs were filled with the diamonds.

They already had a large fortune.

Driving the cutter across the chasm to the plateau upon which they had once stopped, they brought it to a pause there and had supper.

Then the evening was spent examining the gems, and they turned in.

Fritz was left on watch.

He took up a position in the cabin, and began to read a book.

It was an interesting novel written in Fritz's native language.

The hero had just finished drinking two shoppens of Rhein wine, when the villain came into the summer garden eating a frankfurter sausage, and, seizing the heroine was about to steal her, when—

But that was as far as Fritz got.

A tremendous roar that shook the boat brought him to his feet at a bound, and glancing out of a window he beheld a tremendous mass of smoke arising all around the cutter.

"Donner vetter!" gasped the Dutch boy.

He did not wait to say anything else.

Rushing up to the pilot-house he started the helices.

Outside everything was dense with smoke, and smothered rumblings were heard below them incessantly.

"Murder!" yelled Fritz wildly, as the boat soared up in the midst of the smoke, which now began to fill the pilot-house. He furiously rang the gong, and started the searchlight.

Again there came a tremendous explosion.

This time a mass of dust, smoke and stones were blown up, and the cutter was sent reeling through the air.

It struck the side of the crater with a crash, rebounded, and went spinning around and around.

Jack and his friends rushed in half dressed.

One glance out had shown them the situation.

"The volcano!" gasped Jack.

"An eruption!" cried the startled professor.

"Keel haul me, we're goners!" groaned Tim.

The Dutch boy was striving with might and main to keep the boat going steadily, and Jack took his place.

With a turn of the wheel he drove her through the blinding smoke, hoping thus to get out of it.

The roaring and rumbling kept on unabated below them, and they realized that the volcano was getting in a state of eruption.

Away shot the boat like a locomotive.

Still the smoke clouds enveloped her in a dense mist, through which the powerful searchlight failed to penetrate.

Jack became anxious.

Another explosion of the volcano might send up fire, rocks and molten lava to destroy them.

His main plan was to get away from there as fast as possible; but being unable to see a foot ahead in the thick clouds of smoke, he could not tell whence he was going.

His friends peered out of the windows.

They were all in a fever of the most intense anxiety.

On, on plunged the gallant airship under the guidance of its nerry young commander, but yet no sign of escape from those dreadful smoke clouds and volcanic rumblings appeared to give him hope.

CHAPTER XIX.

SEVEN MILLIONS.

To run out of a cloud of smoke would not seem to be a very difficult task, but in this instance the wind was blowing hard carrying the smoke with it in a stream from the crest of the mountain, and the cutter went with it.

Jack soon figured this out, and turning the Flying Fish off at any angle with its course, he drove her to the westward.

By this means he brought her out of it.

She hovered over the great gorge for a moment, then she went driving from the peak downward at an angle.

They had passed the flames and boiling lake long before which kept that part of the mountain at a high temperature.

The boat now hung over the gorge, but swept along by the wind she was carried several miles to the west, when the air became cold and raw, and snow and ice appeared.

A few miles more and there was nothing but a white crystal bed below them, down upon which the moon was shining.

The heat was all gone here, for they were out of the volcanic region, and glancing back they saw vast clouds pouring out of the crater, mingled with lapping flames, myriads of sparks and showers of incandescent ashes.

A great stream of burning lava began to gush from the crater they had been in, and it went pouring down the gorge toward the base of the mighty mountain.

Fritz uttered a sigh of intense relief.

"Ve vhas yust got ourselves out of dot soon enough," he remarked. "I tort ve vhas goin' ter git gooked like sauer kraut."

"We owe our lives to your prompt action," said Jack.

"But whar are we now?" demanded Tim. "I don't see nuthin' but ice, snow an' clouds alow us, an' we might jist as well a-got roasted as froze, ter my way o' thinkin'."

"The mercury is at zero here now," said Hopkins; "but if that volcano breaks into violent eruption the lava stream will pour down this way, too, and soon melt these great pinnacles, drifts and cliffs of frozen water."

Below them was what looked like a river of solid ice, which was a line of dirt and stone.

It was a glacier, and the debris a moraine.

Strange as it may appear, these icy rivers move without water to float them, but are impelled by their own action.

It ran down through a valley.

Within the boat a most intense chilliness prevailed from the bitterly cold wind that swept around from the northern side of the mountain, and the glass windows became covered with hoar frost, despite the intense heat coming from the electric radiators.

Jack sent the cutter down toward the clouds, two miles below.

"We will go through the clouds as soon as possible," said the boy. "Our mine is ruined by the eruption. We cannot get any more of the diamonds from it. Nothing remains now but for us to return to civilization."

"Aye, but we've got a big fortune in them 'ere stones," chuckled Tim; "so we oughten ter kick, my lad. It makes me think o' ther time I wuz aboard o' the United States frigate Wabash."

"Look out!" yelled Fritz suddenly.

"Wot fer?" asked Tim, with a start.

"Dot gale of vind."

"Wot gale?"

"Comin' troo your vhiskeys."

"Wot! D'yer think I'm a-goin' ter blow?"

"No—lie."

"Tim!"

"Aye, aye, Jack!"

Here's the way your yarn sounds to us, only what I say to is true in every particular. I once sat on a ray of light and traveled at the rate of 186,000 miles a second into space toward the sun——"

"Ah, git out! Who ever heard o' goin' at sich speed as that?"

"So you doubt it, eh? Well, sir, that is the rate light travels at. I went from the earth to the sun, 91 million miles away, in less than ten minutes."

"Holy jingo! Avast thar! I say——"

"Don't you believe it?" asked Jack, with a broad smile.

"No, I don't!" bluntly answered Tim.

"Well, it's the truth, and that is more than you have as a basis for your stories. Where are you going to now?"

"I'm a-goin' outside ter think about it," answered Tim, with a look of intense disgust sweeping over his face.

Everybody laughed at the way Jack dosed him with his own medicine.

The boat continued its rapid descent, and in a few minutes went plunging through the cloudbank.

Down it went, and clearing the clouds it ran into a rain-forest underneath, and the temperature increased.

The wind was blowing a gale, and the darkness of night was increased by the gloom of the storm.

Presently the boat got down among the foothills, and sailed away to the southwest at an easy rate of speed.

They were now free of the mountains.

It afforded them a sense of intense relief to be out of that fearful height among the dread convulsions of nature, and they were glad enough to get down within a thousand feet of the earth again.

Millions of dollars' worth of diamonds were destroyed by the eruption of the volcano, but the four aeronauts had enough of them to satisfy any man, and were not disappointed.

"What do you estimate the value of that treasure, professor?" asked the boy, a few hours later, as he sat in the cozy cabin with Hopkins, with the richly laden kegs between them.

"It all depends upon the cost of cutting and their loss and weight, my dear fellow," answered the tall, thin professor, wiping his long hair back from his high brow.

"The kegs weigh about a hundred pounds apiece."

"But half of that weight may be lost in cutting the gems. When you can't get nearly as much per carat for them in the crude state—in fact, they won't bring more than forty dollars per carat at the utmost."

"At that rate we will have about one hundred pounds to sell?"

"Just about—now we can figure on four grains to a carat, and 1,750 carats to a pound; 40 times 1,750 amounts to \$70,000 per pound, and if there are 100 pounds of diamonds sold at \$40 a carat the amount we will get will be about \$7,000,000!"

Jack was amazed and delighted.

One million seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars per piece.

It was a magnificent sum.

"We will get more than I bargained for," he remarked.

"But we may have trouble to sell them," said Hopkins.

"Why?"

"The brokers will fear a flooding of the market may depreciate the value of the stones they have in stock, and refuse to buy them."

"True, sir; but if that should prove to be the case I have a plan whereby we can force them to buy," said Jack, after a moment's thought.

"Have you decided where to sell them?"

"In France."

"Then we will go straight there?"

"Exactly, sir."

"Very well."

When day dawned the boat was a hundred miles from Mount Everest, and went sweeping along over Khatmandu again, and a bee line was made across Delhi to Punjab.

Toward evening the Flying Fish reached a point close to the capital of Delhi, on the Jumna River, the city being inclosed on three sides by a lofty wall of solid stone, the eastern side along the river having no wall, but was faced with high masonry.

It was, they saw, a large and handsome city, containing many large and beautiful buildings and imposing mosques.

But at the time referred to the place was in a state of siege.

There had been an outbreak of mutineers in Meerut, when the officers there were murdered, and the rebel soldiery there set out for Delhi, entered the city, and there were joined by a mob.

The British troops stationed there consisted of native infantry and a battery of artillery, who cast their lot with the mutineers and began by killing their officers.

The Delhi magazine, the largest in northwest India, was in charge of Lieutenant Willoughby, with whom were two other commissioned officers and six non-commissioned officers.

This magazine was attacked by the mutineers just as the airship approached, and the little band of soldiers desperately resisted.

Jack knew the state of revolt the country was in, and upon seeing the gallant white men struggling hopelessly to defend the enormous accumulation of munitions of war stored there, he cried:

"See, boys; can we go by without aiding those brave fellows?"

"No, no, no!" cried his companions.

"Then let us descend and lend them a helping hand!"

They eagerly assented to this proposition, and attiring themselves in their suits of armor they armed themselves to the teeth.

Jack then sent the boat down into the city near the magazine, and the mutineers fled in horror before its approach.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SIEGE OF DELHI.

As the boat was descending Tim ran the glorious stars and stripes up at the flagpole, and as soon as the cutter came to a pause, our friends hurried out on deck.

They had hardly appeared when a hail came from the magazine, to which they replied, stating who and what they were. A cheer pealed from the besieged men.

"And you will aid us?" eagerly asked Willoughby.

"With our lives!" said Jack, watching the mutineers, who were assembled in a great body up the street, raising a furious uproar with their cries and invectives.

"There is no hope of saving the magazine," said the lieutenant. "All we can do is to prevent the mutineers getting it by blowing the whole thing up."

"Then fire a train and board my boat," answered Jack.

They got a ladder ready, and the magazine was fired.

Unfortunately, it exploded before five out of the nine brave soldiers got out, and only four escaped alive to the cutter.

As they came rushing towards the cutter a volley came from the mutineers, and the lieutenant fell, wounded.

The other three got upon the boat.

Lying in the street the brave lieutenant might have fallen into the hands of the furious mob had not Jack sprang to the ground, rushed over and picked him up.

The gallant boy started on a run for the boat.

None of the flying particles from the explosion had hurt the Flying Fish or her crew, but Willoughby and his men had been badly wounded.

Many of the Hindoos were killed outright.

As soon as they rallied and saw Jack saving the life of the lieutenant a hundred rifles were aimed at the boy.

Before a shot could be fired his friends upon the cutter opened fire upon the dusky natives.

There came a terrible exchange of shots, in which the suits worn by our friends amply protected them from injury, while the bullets failed to penetrate the hull of the airship.

Reaching the ladder with his senseless burden, Jack got him up on the deck of the cutter and laid him inside.

Despite the heavy fusillade poured in at them, the savage Hindoos charged toward the boat to overwhelm our friends.

They came surging through the street called Shandni Chank, or Street of Silver, a fine, wide avenue lined with nim and pipal trees running from the fort to the Lahore gate.

It was like the impetuous onslaught of a tidal wave, and it seemed as if the thousands of human beings must sweep up and over the boat irresistibly, despite all obstacles, for upon seeing human beings on the boat their fears of it ceased.

At this juncture Jack dragged the repeating gun out of its closet in the wall of the pilot-house, and brought it to the bulwark.

It was already loaded, and training it to bear upon the horde, he fired it at the rate of one hundred shots a second, the terrible projectiles driving the mob back in horror over the fearful carnage it created in their ranks.

The boy said not a word.

Nor did he stop until every shot was fired.

The scene of terror and excitement that prevailed among the mutineers baffles all description.

In the midst of it Jack sent the cutter up in the air.

"Are there any more white people in trouble here who are in need of our assistance?" queried Jack.

"Yes," was the feeble reply, for Willoughby was so badly injured that he afterward died. "In the palace there are about fifty Europeans and Surasians, nearly all females, who were captured in trying to escape from the town on the day of the outbreak. They have been confined in a stifling chamber for fifteen days, and it is the intention of the mutineers to bring them out into the courtyard and massacre the whole party."

"In Heaven's name direct me to the spot at once, and I will make an effort to save their lives," said Jack.

The lieutenant did so.

As the boat swept over to the palace, to the amazement of the rescued men over their situation, they heard the sound of firearms and the most agonizing shrieks.

The blood coursed like fire in Jack's veins.

He realized that the awful scene of carnage had begun, and as the boat came to a pause fifty feet above the palace and they glanced down they beheld a harrowing sight.

They were too late!

The unfortunate prisoners all lay stretched upon the ground, brutally murdered, and among them were swarming a large number of the Hindoos, who had consummated the atrocity.

A shudder of horror passed over Jack and his friends upon witnessing the revolting spectacle.

"You look agitated," said Willoughby, in suspicious tones.

"We have cause for apprehension. We are too late!" answered Jack.

A groan burst from the lieutenant's lips.

"Avenge them!" he cried.

"I shall. Arm yourselves with grenades, boys, and bombard the cowardly scoundrels down in yonder courtyard!"

His friends availed themselves of this order with a relish,

for the pitiful sight spread before their view angered them to the utmost, and made them feel bitterly toward the Hindoos.

A box full of grenades was brought out on deck, and they pelted the fiends below with them, arousing a fearful din, and left but few alive to boast of their rascality.

The boat then shot across the city.

Sir H. Barnard, who had succeeded Gen. Anson as commander-in-chief, had routed the mutineers at Badli-ka-Sara with a handful of European and Sikh soldiers, after a severe action.

He then encamped upon a ridge overlooking the city.

This force was too weak to capture Delhi, as he had no siege train or heavy guns.

All he could do was to hold his position until the arrival of reinforcements and a siege train.

When the boat began to descend upon the camp the British soldiers became alarmed until they saw the American flag upon the cutter, when their native intelligence told them what the Flying Fish really was.

Willoughby was anxious to get into this camp, for he realized that he was fast dying, and wanted to be among his friends when his soul left his body.

Jack brought his aerostat to a pause on the ground, and the English soldiers came flocking around it curiously.

Among the first was the baronet.

"In Heaven's name, what is this machine?" he asked.

"A flying ship, as you can see," replied Jack.

"American, too?"

"Of course—that's where most of the best patents originate, sir."

"And what brings you here?"

"A very sad duty," replied Jack. "I have some friends of yours—and here they come. They can tell their own story."

The men he had saved left the cutter, carrying Willoughby and the baronet's grief knew no bounds upon seeing the sad fate which had overtaken the gallant lieutenant.

Explanations followed.

The nobleman warmly thanked Jack and his friends for what they had done in their behalf.

"Can I be of any further service to you?" the boy asked.

"None," replied Barnard, shaking his head. "I mean to keep my present position, with the help of God, until I can get a large enough force to attack the city and capture it."

"I will leave you, then," said Jack. "We have got to travel back to America, and as the journey will occupy considerable time we cannot waste any of it remaining here."

The British encampment cheered our friends as Jack sent the cutter up into the air again, and our friends waved their hats and handkerchiefs in response.

The boat mounted to an altitude of a thousand feet, when the helices were graded to keep her there, the screw was put in motion, and she sped away.

Over the besieged city she fled, her crew dropping down every explosive bomb they had in passing, and in a short time Delhi was left far astern.

The Punjab opened before their view, and with the dark mantle of night drawn upon the scene like some monstrous bird the Flying Fish sped on.

Fritz was steering her.

In the cabin Jack, Tim and the professor sat at the supper table enjoying an excellent repast.

"Our journey out is at an end now," said the boy, in cheerful tones, "and if nothing delays us we will soon make Paris, to the wonderment of her populace, and get rid of our diamond there. Then ho! for Wrightstown."

"Have you got your course mapped out, dear boy?" asked Hopkins.

"Of course. We go over the Hindoo Koosh Mountains into Turkestan, then across the Caspian Sea, along the Caucasus

mountains to the Black Sea. Then on we go through Austria, Germany and into France.

"An' here's success ter our makin' port in Paris safe an' sound," said Tim, swallowing his allowance of grog without a break.

CHAPTER XXI.

SELLING THE DIAMONDS.

When the airship had arrived within sight of the city of Paris, our friends kept it in suspension until after nightfall, in order to make a descent without attracting attention.

She was brought to a pause in a woods on the outskirts of Montainebleau, and, with several samples of his gems in his pocket and accompanied by Fritz, the boy inventor made his way into the city, and they quietly registered at a hotel.

On the following morning the boys sallied out, and called on the greatest dealer in diamonds in the gay city.

He was an enormously wealthy man, who controlled most of the Parisian market, and, upon Jack requesting an interview with him upon important business, he politely ushered the two aeronauts into his private office, and asked the boy in French:

"What, sir, may your business with me be?"

"I wish to sell you one hundred pounds of uncut diamonds," replied Jack.

The diamond broker gave a violent start, put on his eyeglasses, viewed Jack from head to foot in utter astonishment, and said:

"Eh? What did you remark?"

"I have one hundred pounds in uncut diamonds to sell you," repeated Jack coolly, in the French language, with which he was familiar.

"Are you jesting with me, sir?"

"Not in the least."

"One hundred pounds—pounds, did you say—of uncut diamonds?"

"Exactly so, monsieur, and here are my samples."

Upon saying which the boy placed a handful of the gems upon a table separating him from the dealer in precious stones. The look upon the Frenchman's face was that of blank amazement.

He picked up the specimens one after the other, closely examined them, laid them down, gingerly, and then gasped:

"They are really genuine."

"Will you buy them?" the boy asked.

"Do you mean to say you have as you claim?"

"Monsieur, I am here strictly on business."

"It does not seem natural; but where, pray, did you get such a vast lot of these large, magnificent stones?"

"From a mine in India."

"And how much do you want for them uncut?"

"Forty dollars a carat."

"That is a fair estimate—eight hundred francs."

"Do you wish to see the entire lot?"

"No."

"Then you will not buy?"

"Not to the value of a sou."

"Why not?"

"Because the quantity would depreciate values here."

"Is your answer final?"

"It is, monsieur."

"Very well. I shall retail them myself at fifty cents on the dollar."

"What!" gasped the broker. "You would ruin us."

"I have five hundred pounds of these diamonds, and I shall retail them in Paris. If you will buy but one-fifth of them I shall not flood the country and paralyze your trade," coolly said Jack.

"But no matter where you sell the rest, diamonds will be a drug on the market for a long time, and you will cause the failure of some of our most thriving houses here——"

"Wait! I will make you a proposition. If you will purchase one hundred pounds of these diamonds, I will fling the rest into the river Seine and depart content with \$7,000,000. On the other hand, if you fail to buy, I will have to sell them myself at such a low figure that you merchants will lose heavily."

The boy's cunning device worked like a charm.

"Wait," said the dealer hastily. "Give me time to think."

"I shall return for your answer this afternoon at three o'clock," replied Jack, arising.

"By that time," said the broker, "I shall have a conference with all the leading dealers in the city and give you an answer."

Jack and Fritz then left the office.

The boy then provided himself with a dozen stout valises, and had all but four of them filled with glass crystals purchased at a glass factory, while the empty bags were carried to the boat.

They were there filled with the precious stones.

Jack then went to the custom house authorities with the gems, and declaring the diamonds he gave the appraisers a check covering the amount of duty on the stones.

Promptly at three o'clock he was again in the broker's office, and found it thronged with expert dealers.

The genuine diamonds were brought in and examined, and the glass crystals were shown at long range, the boy scarcely giving them a chance to see them ere he locked the valises again.

By so doing he led the brokers to imagine he had an enormous lot of diamonds, as the glass greatly resembled the genuine stones.

The diamonds were examined and carefully weighed.

Then the broker told the boy that they would form a syndicate and buy one hundred pounds of them, if he agreed to get rid of the rest in order not to lower the value of what they had and might buy.

To this Jack readily agreed, and within an hour he had their checks for the specified amounts, and accompanied by the whole party and carrying the valises of false stones they went down to the river, and boarded a boat that crossed it.

It was night, and Jack and Fritz opened the valises and emptied their glass contents into the river, satisfying the brokers, who did not dream of what a shrewd trick was being played upon them.

Then the two boys returned to the airship.

On the following day the checks were turned into drafts on New York, and they made preparations for their journey home.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

The Flying Fish darted up into the air, her helices and screws spinning with a loud buzz, and the strange ship floated away in the sky over the broad Atlantic, homeward bound.

Every one on board was glad, for they had undergone so many privations and hairbreadth escapes that they were becoming tired of it, and wished for the serene lives they lived at Wrightstown again.

Their cruise had thus far been a glorious success; they had enjoyed an unlimited amount of adventure and pleasure, and were burdened with riches enough to last a lifetime.

On the third day out Jack went through the boat and closely examined the machinery to see if everything was in proper working order, as was his custom, when he made a startling discovery.

The extremely cold atmosphere into which the boat had

gone over Mount Everest had cracked several of the shafts, and they were now working all right, but were liable to break at any moment and cause the boat to fall.

In order to avert a dangerous catastrophe, the boy decided to keep the Flying Fish no higher than one hundred feet from the water, for if she fell from the air she was bound to float in the water.

Returning to the deck, where the professor and Tim were skylarking with Bismarck and Whiskers, he explained their peril.

"Lord!" gasped Tim. "We might have had another fall and got killed, if we wuz up too high, had yer not seen that, Jack."

"Fritz," said the boy, "lower the cutter to one hundred feet."

"I vhas lower it to a dousand feet, if you Mke, alretty."

As they were then but five hundred feet high, Tim growled:

"I reckon as yer figgerin' tackle has gone by ther board, my hearty."

"Yah! I tink so neider," chuckled Fritz. "Every dime I looks me at dot class eye of yourn I vonder if yer don't haf ter stand by yer het ter tink straight vonet, ain'd id?"

Tim took a chew of plug and glared daggers at the Dutch boy.

"Don't git so sassy!" he growled. "Mebbe I can't figger as good as you, my lad, still I can't help a-reckonin' as this craft 'd float easier if it wuzn't ballasted down wi' so much hog meat as you carry about."

"Have you got our reckoning, Tim?" queried Jack.

"Aye, aye, sir! We must be about north latitude forty-six degrees an' ten minutes, and longitude thirty-three, north o' ther Azores," replied the old sailor meditatively.

"In three days we ought to reach the shores of America."

"Jist what I'm a-reckonin' on, sir—we've made twenty-four hundred miles. I reckerlect when I wuz aboard o' ther ole frigate Wabash, ther commodore once ast me if I had ther reckonin', an' I tole him I had, but when he ast me wot it wuz, fer the life o' me I couldn't remember it."

"On account of too much whisky, yer vhas trunk?" suggested Fritz.

"No, yer lubber; but I squinted up at ther sun, an', sez I—"

But Tim did not finish his lie.

The professor uttered a startled cry.

"Great heavens! Look there!" he cried.

"A waterspout!" cried Jack.

Behind the boat a great pillar extending from sea to sky was rushing after the boat.

It was fully formed, and appeared as a tall pillar of cloud, whirling around its axis, and exhibiting the progressive movement of the whole mass, exactly like the dust whirlwinds of India.

The sea at the base of the whirling vortex was thrown into the most violent commotion, resembling the surface of water in rapid ebullition.

It is a popular fallacy that the water of the sea is sucked up in a solid mass by the waterspouts.

In reality it is only the spray from the broken waves that is carried up and whirled around by the wind. Observations of the rain gauge conclusively proved this.

The waterspout was not fifty feet from the boat when the professor discovered it, and it was rushing along in the draught made by the passage of the boat through the air.

"Port your helm!" shouted Jack. "Quick, on your life!"

Fritz spun the wheel around, and all hands rushed inside. But it was too late.

With a sudden leap forward the great pillar of spray reached the boat, and the next instant engulfed it.

Around and around the boat was spun, and it shot up in the air in the great column, and then there came a fearful crack-

ing and snapping, as if different parts of the boat were being rent to pieces in the clutches of the whirlwind.

Then down it was beaten to the sea, and the waterspout broke.

It fell, burying the hapless boat in its midst.

Several hours afterwards a trans-Atlantic steamer passed that way, and the lookout discerned what looked like the upturned hull of a metal boat floating in the water.

There were four human beings clinging to it for their lives, and they had a bird and a monkey with them.

It is needless to say who the wrecked crew were.

They were picked up in a half senseless condition, and the air cutter soon afterwards sank, for it was only the confined air in the hull which had thus far kept it afloat.

The wrecked crew were carefully attended to by the officers of the steamer, and finally recovered themselves.

Beyond the meager fact of having been wrecked, none of our friends knew exactly what happened to them.

They had been confused by the accident, and none of them knew how they got out of the boat.

Nothing but the natural instinct of self-preservation had saved them from a watery grave.

Now the fact remained that they had managed to get hold of the floating hulk and cling to it, and they cheered and encouraged each other as best they could all the while.

The steamship people took the best care of them, and they safely crossed the ocean and landed in New York.

Their drafts had not been lost, and they were cashed, and the amounts were deposited.

The professor remained in the city, where he lived, and Jack, Tim and Fritz, with their pets, returned to Wrightstown.

It was a different return than that to which our friends had been accustomed, and every one of the inhabitants were amazed when the local papers next day published an account of their adventures, and recounted the loss of the air cutter under such tragic circumstances.

Our friends were glad enough to get back alive.

They never saw anything of Zobeide or any of her tribe again, but they had a large fortune equally divided among them to prove the truth of the gypsy queen's story.

Jack Wright had added another laurel to the famous wreath of invention that crowned his brow, but as his boat was wrecked the loss was a great disappointment to him.

In nowise daunted, however, he began to devise a newer contrivance, with which he expected to surpass the achievements of his former inventions, and we will show you its marvels in another book.

We will leave him and his friends for the present working upon the new model, however, for limit of space here to describe the boy's wonderful work compels us to bring our story to a close.

THE END.

Read "THE BROKEN BOTTLE; OR, A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW." A True Temperance Story, by Jno. B. Dowd, which will be the next number (211) of "Pluck and Luck."

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